

THROUGH JESUS TO GOD

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*An Outline Study Course for
Young People and Adults*



THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE
HYDE PARK, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

A33-3203

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COMPOSED AND PRINTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PRESS, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, U.S.A.

EDITORIAL NOTE

It is difficult to imagine a new approach to the life of Jesus. Courses centered about Jesus have been many and varied and, seemingly, exhaustive. There remains, however, a very significant field of study in the attempt to use an appreciation of the experience of Jesus as a pathway to experience of God. The world is becoming more and more conscious of the fact that while there is a growing spirit of quest toward God, there is also a growing feeling that the venture leads in the direction of an increased emphasis upon experience. In the early days of Christianity people sought the miraculous in relation to the physical world as a confirmation of their faith in God. Today they yet long for some significant attestation of the existence of God. Older people find it in experiences which they cannot communicate. Might the younger generation lacking such experience, be able to find it vicariously in the experience of Jesus? With such a purpose in mind this course will trace anew the story of the life of the one person in the world's history who seems to have had a supreme experience of God, and a perfect understanding of him and with him.

Any person who has conscientiously followed the instructions of this course may send in answers to the questions following each month's work and receive a certificate for the course. A fee of fifty cents is required.

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Study I
Jesus Finding God through
Boyhood Experiences

BY THEODORE G. SOARES

A father was recently asked by his five-year-old son, "Where is God?" He answered, "God is in everything good that we do. When you look kindly at anyone, that is God looking out of your eyes." The father was endeavoring to help the child into the experience of God as the power of goodness in the world, which we see most significantly in human life.

We all believe in God because we have seen him in other people. He becomes real to us in these human experiences. We believe that he is more than the human love and goodness because we have first seen him in these social relations.

Christians have found God in Jesus, because Jesus so simply and beautifully found God himself in all that was good and true and beautiful about him.

Doubtless the spiritual meaning of the universe can come to the man who is sensitive to its meaning as it cannot come to those whose hearts are filled with Martha's "many things."

We cannot with precision enter into the childhood experiences of Jesus, but we can reconstruct the outward conditions in which he grew up and see to some extent the opportunities of religious experience that were afforded him.

I. The Religious Home

A recent writer¹ speaks of the unconscious influence exerted by the parents who bend over the infant's crib in prayer. Early the reverence and devotion of religious parents affect the attitudes of the child. Psychologists are telling us that the first weeks of life are of the highest significance in determining the disposition of the new member of the group who is so well equipped by nature to respond to all that plays upon him.

¹ Mrs. Mumford, *The Dawn of Religion in the Soul of the Child*.

Edersheim¹ says there were no homes in the ancient world like those of Israel. When a Jewish home was truly religious, it had a quality of piety and devotion that was very impressive upon young life.

The first religious act in the home of a Jewish boy was the solemn and impressive rite of circumcision, when his name was first spoken in connection with the dedicatory prayer. While the infant could not himself derive any meaning from the ceremony, the family was deeply impressed, and in future years the lad would know that he had thus been formally admitted to the covenant of Israel. As indication of the character of this sacramental ceremony, the account of the circumcision of John should be read (Luke 1:57-79). We may think of Jesus as present when his younger brothers received the sign of the Hebrew covenant, and realizing how through the centuries his people had kept that solemn pact with God. He was in later years to grow beyond undue emphasis on ritual, but in childhood these folk experiences of doing the Divine Will must have helped him to feel that he was the child of the Covenant God.

Very early Jesus must have been conscious of the mezuzah. When his mother took him out of the door, she would stop at the doorpost where there was a little folded parchment. This she touched with great reverence and then kissed her fingers. Some day he would ask, "Why do you do that?" She would explain that the holy name of the God of Israel was written upon that parchment. She would then recite to him the sacred words of the Law which were written within the parchment. Let us turn to those passages, Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21, and see what the pious Jew inscribed upon the doorpost of his dwelling. Edersheim tells us that this was the symbol of the wonderful promise, "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even forevermore."

Such practices may be perfunctory, even superstitious. To many a Jew the mezuzah is a sign of luck, which he would be afraid to dispense with. But ritual affords to piety a means of expression. Mary and Joseph were the kind of people to whom the symbol of the divine protection would be full of meaning. Happy the child to whom religion is thus pictorially presented. The boy Jesus may have had a genuine experience of God as he kissed the fingers that had touched the divine name. Perhaps those deeper insights into the meaning of the Scriptures and the Sabbath, which later so characterized his teachings, may have had their

¹ *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. Gives the most interesting details of the life in the Jewish home in Jesus' day.

beginnings in the appreciations of the simple religious practices of the home.

But we learn as much from attitudes as from words and deeds. Mary "hid things in her heart"; but they affected her looks, her tones of speech, her estimate of all that happened, and Jesus found the God life in his mother's faith and love. Religious educators today are discussing whether religion is taught or caught. Of course both occur. Much comes to us through the definite teaching process, and we shall examine how this was organized for the Jewish boy. But also, we gain much from the attitudes, the half-expressed purposes, even the feelings of those about us.

It has often been remarked that when Jesus called God his Father, he paid silent tribute to the obscure carpenter, who appears for such a brief moment in the Gospel narrative and then is gone. An honorable, kindly man was that father in the Nazareth home. Jesus' experience of Joseph's fatherliness led him to that simple interpretation of God.

II. The Celebration of Religion

How impoverished would be our religion if we should discard from it the ceremonials of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, not to speak of many lesser festivals and celebrations. Mature people feel the value of these dramatizations of the religious experience, and very much more important are they for youth. Anything is more real when it is dramatized. We are realizing that in our modern religion, with the new emphasis on pageantry and ceremonial.

The great meanings of the Hebrew religion were most significantly dramatized. Every week before Sabbath the ceremony of the lights would announce the coming of the holy day. Then the scrupulous observance of the prescribed rest would give the sense of awe and sanctity. Jesus' most vehement attack upon the followers of mere ceremonial were leveled at the Pharisaic Sabbath, but not at the fundamental institution. How richly significant may have been that break in the routine of work which the day of rest and worship brought. Very early in life the child would recognize the difference which came with the seventh day. The carpenter would not go to his bench; Mary would have no domestic duties to perform. Everything would have been prepared the previous day to give the family the holiday (holy day) of friendship, worship, and good cheer. Jesus found God in those Sabbaths, and they helped to make all the days good and pure.

Then came the round of festivals. In mid-winter every home was joyously lighted in celebration of that wondrous historic memory, the Dedication of the Temple. The first night one candle was lighted and

set; the second night, two; until the eighth, when the full eight candles were burning. Every Jewish child then heard the story of the terrible days when the tyrant had desecrated the temple, offering every insult to the Jewish religion, until at last the heroic Judas the Maccabee had driven him from the land. What a joyous purification of the sacred place had then occurred. And ever after the Feast of Dedication was to be observed, for God had saved his people from their enemies. Jesus heard the heroic stories and believed in the God of his fathers.

Every pious Jew was praying for a greater than the Maccabee to come and expel the tyrant who was then dominant in the land. How did this affect the Nazareth lad? In Jesus' later ministry we find little concern about the Roman rule. His patriotism was deeper than the longing for independence; it had become a longing for righteousness. When did he learn this deeper truth? Did he learn in the Bible lessons of that simple home that the Jewish people had proved untrue to the lofty ideals of the Maccabees, and that the Feast of Dedication was, not only a sacred memory, but still more a lofty summons to the purification of the heart?

In the early spring came the jolly festival of Purim. Every Jewish boy must have looked forward to it with anticipation. There was more merriment than religion in it. True, the story of Esther was read and the name of Haman was roundly cursed with cries and catcalls and every noise that could be made. All the boys enjoyed that, and secretly knew that they were cursing Herod or Caesar or any other tyrant. Not much religion in Purim. True, God had preserved Esther and her people from their enemies and terribly avenged them. But it was good fun rather than revenge that probably prevailed. Perhaps Jesus found God in the merriment. He never said himself that he was a man of sorrows; and surely he was not a boy of sorrows. Was he later thinking of the happiness and the carefree joy of children when he said "of such are the kingdom of heaven"? Perhaps he had the religious experience of God from the merriment at Purim.

Then came the great festival of Passover. Joseph, and sometimes Mary with him, would go up to Jerusalem. Jesus and the younger children would remain at home. But he would note the rigid exclusion of all leaven from the house during that whole week. He would hear the wondrous story of the deliverance from Egypt as it is told in Exodus, chapter 12. He would gain the solemn sense that God had been with his people in the days of their great need.

Summer would bring the Feast of Weeks. The sense of dependence upon the goodness of God and gratitude for the ripening harvest would be experienced by the dedication of the best of the first-fruits. Nazareth

was near the fertile plain of Esdraelon, where the grain of the country grew. Jesus would every year witness the ceremonials laid down in Lev. 23:9-14.

The Jewish New Year is in the early autumn. The same sense of reckoning that we feel at New Year's would be in the Jewish home. Then follows the most solemn day of the Jewish year, so solemn that it is still called "The Day." It is the fast day of Atonement. The origin of this ceremonial was supposed to go back to Moses and is recounted in Leviticus, chapter 16. It actually arose in the later Jewish life as an attempt to bring the nation to a sense of its failure. The most elaborate ceremonial was at the Temple, where the sacrifices were offered. But in every Jewish home there was a rigid fast, and in every synagogue there were solemn services. No Jewish boy would ever forget that awesome day. To Jesus, sensitive as he must have been to the good and the evil that were about him, it must early have been deeply meaningful that the people were seeking forgiveness for all their sins.

The round of festivals closed with the joyous Feast of Booths. The best description of it is in Neh. 8:9-18. It was primarily the thanksgiving for the harvest, corresponding to Harvest Home and to our own Thanksgiving Day; but there had been attached to it the historical memory of the wilderness journey when the people had to live in booths. So there was kept up the happy custom of building a booth of branches and the whole family moving out of the house to live in gypsy style for a week. What an interest and a delight for a boy. And there was feasting and good cheer and charity. Thankfulness is a most natural religious expression. The harvest ever lifts one's thoughts to the Great Giver. Of a surety, Jesus found God in the harvest gratitude. With our sense of natural law and our consciousness of the scientific process of crop-raising, we do not seem as directly in contact with God as earlier men felt they were; but the great goodness of the universe gives us year by year our food, and a religious celebration of the sense of gratitude is fitting and satisfying.

The celebration of religion in the synagogue was the high point of the week in every Jewish community. Here the assembly of the people reaffirmed their ancient faith and kindled again their hope in God. Read Luke 4:16-20 and Acts 13:14-43 as good descriptions of what took place in the synagogue.

Note Luke's phrase, "as his custom was," which brings before us the boy Jesus going with his parents every Sabbath to the synagogue. Here he heard the reading of the Law, which was exemplified every day in his home life. Here he listened to the reading of the Prophets, whose burn-

ing words ever spoke of social righteousness and of God's demand that man live rightly with man. Here he joined in the prayers and in the psalms which expressed the faith and hope of the believer.

Public worship may so exalt the meaning of life as to give a religious tone to all its acts, or it may seem to be so peculiarly the religious exercise that the rest of life will be secular. One may find God exclusively in worship; or one may find him always, and therefore especially, in worship. One may make one day and one kind of activity sacred and all else secular, or the sanctity experience may extend over all one's life. Against a religion that was departmentalized Jesus vehemently protested in his teaching. We may believe that in his childhood the synagogue experience was not an escape from common things into religious security, but a celebration of that religious meaning of life, in which God was ever present in love and guidance.

The religion of the Nazareth child was a happy observance of the religious practices of his people, habits of conformity with the ways of his group, and some real experience of the fellowship and help of God. Again we ask, "Was there not some reminiscence of his own simple childhood religious experience when he said that one must be childlike in order to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven?"

III. Education

There is a very true sense in which all that has been discussed above is education. Ever more important than any set routine is the life-process as an educator. The religious home, where fine social co-operations bind the family together in common enterprises, is often far more significant than schools with their studies. But there is a proper sense in which the word "education" may be applied to the direction and instruction of children with a definite consciousness of purpose. In the Jewish home there was high obligation upon the parents to give such religious education to their children. While the informal training of the earlier years was largely in the hands of the mother, the definite obligation of leading a son into the way of Israel lay upon the father. Almost as soon as the boy was able to speak the first words, he would be taught to recite the great monotheistic creed "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Together with this he would learn the whole passage, Deut. 6:4-9. This is still used universally by the Jews and is called the Shema, the Hebrew word for "hear," which begins the sentence.

Many other passages of the Bible would be committed to memory and carefully recited in the childhood years. Edersheim tells us that

there was a custom of selecting for a boy a birthday text, that is, some verse of Scripture containing the same letters as his Hebrew name. To see how this was done, we may imagine the same custom in English. A boy named William might have as his text, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way." The memory of the verse was supposed to be especially efficacious. We can see the possibility of this becoming magical, the danger which constantly besets those who use the Bible apart from its historical meaning and social setting.

More valuable was the memorization of the psalms for the days of the week and especially the festal psalms, known as the Hallel (Pss. 113-18). Read these beautiful lyrics and note how they express joy and confidence in God's care, with what insight they interpret life, and how they suggest the divine guidance given to the nation through its history.

The question is at once raised as to the value of memorizations of scripture. The Hebrew system undoubtedly put great emphasis upon that memory process which is under so much criticism today as we are seeking an education through the development of the experience of the child. It may well be asked, "If Jesus came to so rich a religious experience under the memory system, why should we give it less place in our modern education?"

In the first place, an important difference must be noted between the Jewish memorizations and those which are criticized today. The Jewish boy was not learning something that was merely to be recited, but something that was to be used with the elders in the regular religious practices of the family and the synagogue. The difference is evident if we note the distinction today between the memorization of the Lord's Prayer and of the catechism. The child may not greatly understand either; but the ability to recite the former enables him to participate in worship with adults who also use it; while ability to recite the latter, only enables him to fulfil a requirement of discipline.

The Shema, the prayer, the Hallel, were known and used by all Jews, young and old. Memorization united the group in social expression. Jesus must have felt the happiness of being able to pray and praise with those he loved long before the meaning of the words was clear to him. This social participation was the main value in the earlier years. The value would increase as he grew into the experience of all that these noble scriptures express. We give a similar training to our children when we teach them the hymns and prayers which we know ourselves and which we use with them. We do an entirely different thing when we require them to learn something which is not in social use, which we do not know ourselves, and which we do not use with them. The education-

al suggestion for us from the Hebrew procedure is not, as some suppose, the importance of requiring more memorization, but rather the value of acquiring more common material of religious expression which we can employ in united family and church worship.

Yet, after all is said, the limitations and drawbacks of the Hebrew system should be recognized. Memorization is at best only a small part of the learning process. The creative, artistic spirit of the child Jesus must often have been irked by the tedious educational methods, just as his infant limbs were withheld from free and natural exercise by the swaddling bands. It was in spite of some of these educational methods, and not because of them, that he grew. When he himself became a teacher, how little he cared to drill his disciples in words, how much he was concerned that they should catch the spirit of his way of life.

In his fifth or sixth year the Jewish boy was sent to school. And it was a Bible school held in the synagogue. We have very little contemporary information about Jewish elementary education. Our knowledge is of schools of a somewhat later time, yet it is quite possible that the educational practices go back to the first century. If this be so, we can think of the little lad going from the Nazareth home to the nearby synagogue, there to learn for five years the sacred literature of his people. For the textbook during these years was the Bible.

It seems strange to us at first consideration to think of a child beginning his studies with the book of Leviticus. Not even high-school students among us could do much with that ritual literature. But we must remember that this book dealt with the ceremonial that was actually proceeding in the Temple. Read the first three chapters hastily just to get the general sense. Here is the ritual of the animal and grain offerings, and of the communion feast that every Jew knew was being performed in his name by the priests in Jerusalem. To be sure, the Jewish child in Galilee had never seen this ceremonial. But he had heard it spoken of as an important element in the national life. He knew that in the temple sacred acts took place which were for the good of all the people.

Yet the *memoriter* study of the Law must have been something of a weary exercise. The Jewish scholastic regulations were kindly; there was insistence that the pupils must not be overworked; but the learning process was a task. Jesus accepted it, as a dutiful lad accepted the prescriptions of his elders, and doubtless he found God in the sheer discharge of a duty.

After the Law came the study of the Prophets. Jesus' eager and creative imagination must have reveled in the dramatic stories of the prophetic literature. The living voice of God calling men to righteous-

ness and truth would find echo in his childlike soul. The sense of God as dwelling with his people would be real to the little lad who found the way of love and duty to be natural and happy. But again the rigid memorizing would detract from the inspiration of these noble scriptures.

After the Prophets the children would learn the third part of the Old Testament canon, called the Hagiographa, or Sacred Writings, comprising all the books not included in the first two parts. Here especially the Psalms with their lyric beauty and their rhythmic movement and their deep religious feeling would appeal to the eager child. The memorizing of such songs is never a heavy task.

What did the child Jesus think of the "enemy" Psalms? Half the Psalter has reference to enemies. Even the most exquisite of all these lovely lyrics sings of the "table in the presence of mine enemies." Forgiveness of enemies was to have a great place in the teachings of Jesus. He placed that as an inevitable condition of the favor of God. Yet this ancestral literature was full of unforgiveness and revenge. Israel had suffered and was waiting for retribution upon her enemies. When did Jesus learn the beauty of forgiveness? How early did some simple experiment in returning good for evil convince him of the glory of that better way? We cannot, of course, answer these questions. But we may well believe that it was the mercy of God, the forgiveness of God, the promises of the prophets that God would pardon, that led Jesus to the wonderful experience of forgiveness.

IV. The Galilee Country

The modern visitor to Nazareth realizes at once its unique situation. Jealous Cana may have looked down upon its nearby neighbor, but Nazareth must have been an interesting place to the boys who lived there. It was, to be sure, a town of no great importance from any point of view. But it was a part of the populous and industrious Galilee; it overlooked the beauty of the Plain of Esdraelon; it was on the highroad of travel; it was amid the historic places of Israel's story. Are not these conditions that may lead to an experience of God?

When Jesus became a teacher, he drew religious lessons from all the Galilee experience, from women making bread, fishermen at their nets, farmers sowing their grain, merchants carrying their wares, stewards administering property, slaves doing their tasks, shepherds tending their flocks. The busy life of man showed him the work and purpose of God. At least he must have been a boy with eyes open to all the life of his populous and busy country. The reader is advised to run through the

Gospels and note all the indications of this acquaintance with the world of affairs.

Scholars are not sure how far Josephus can be trusted when he states that Galilee contained 240 towns and villages, each with not less than 15,000 inhabitants. But the Romans had become expert census-takers, and Josephus' testimony at least indicates a thriving country. Jesus, who grew up to find God in all of life, doubtless saw the busy industry about him and felt that all work well done was according to the will of God. And doubtless, as he saw injustice, fraud, selfishness in the busy life of Galilee, he realized that God had a different purpose for his people. Did even his childhood experience teach him that *things* come after righteousness? (See Matt. 6:33-34.)

How interesting would be some authentic information about Jesus' childhood. What was his attitude toward nature? When did he begin to love birds and flowers, sunshine and rain, the wind blowing, the sunset ablaze in the sea? Most artists and poets are very early sensitive to the beauty that is to dominate their lives. Jesus must have loved the beautiful, fertile land in which he lived. The wild flowers of Esdraelon in the springtime are a sight never to be forgotten. God gives the flowers their beauty; will he forget his children? It was a simple faith, perhaps not so naïve after all, for Jesus knew that towers fall on good men as well as on evil, and that men could be blind apart from any consequences of sin. But he found God in all the goodness, the beauty, the love, the happiness of life. Again, we may say that he may have been looking back on that unsophisticated recognition of the goodness of the world, spite of its tragedy, when he praised the childlike quality. Read Matt. 6:25-35 for Jesus' religious interpretation of nature.

And Nazareth was on the highroad of travel. The caravan routes lay within sight of the little town. Trade from Damascus and the East, from all the Mediterranean, from Egypt on the south, passed and repassed. Companies of Roman soldiers, exhibiting the power and discipline of the great Empire, constantly reminded the Nazareth Jews of that greater world of which they were a part, and gave them also bitter evidence that the day of the Gentile was not yet gone. Roman governors with splendid retinues offered spectacles to kindle the imagination and to sadden the soul. Travelers, for there were many in those days, revealed to the people of the towns of Galilee the diversified civilization of the larger world.

So Jesus was not a country boy away from the ways of men. He was in the midst of the world-life; apart from its great concerns, but observant of its varied interests. Some day he was to speak of kings going

afar to secure recognition, of generals making war after due preparation, of great men founding cities, of wealthy youth searching for pleasure. He was to believe in the God of righteousness and love working for a kingdom of the spirit in the midst of all this varied cosmopolitan life. He did not despise men's wide interests, but he did believe that anxious concern for the good things of life might prevent men from seeing what is best. How far did this come into the experience of the child? Perhaps only as in the play of imagination afforded by the view of the great world beyond his village, there was no place for envy or for trivial ambition. The child's deepening satisfaction in the goodness of God and his happy relation with all kinds of men laid the basis for that religious philosophy which rose superior to circumstance. It is remarkable how Jesus in his manhood could meet all kinds of people on their own level, sympathetic with the lowly, dignified with the great. He had none of the crude assertiveness of the poor man claiming equality with the rich, but rather the dignity of a truly democratic view of life. Early he learned that we are all God's children.

And once again Nazareth was a significant place to live because it was in view of so much of the national history. No Jewish boy could grow up there without hearing the story of his fathers as it gathered about Jezreel, Samaria, Esdraelon, Mount Tabor, Mount Carmel, Megiddo. As in our own day when Lord Allenby led the British troops through the Pass of Megiddo to the defeat of the Turks, so all the armies of ancient time marching from the Euphrates and from the Hittite country to the Nile went the same inevitable route. The great stories of Elijah centered about Carmel.¹ The heroic tale of Deborah was laid by the banks of the Kishon.² Read the second book of Kings and note the incidents that occurred about the great plain of Jezreel.

The Jewish boy grew up with the love of his country's story in his heart. Patriotism may be narrow and bigoted, but it may also be noble and generous. In the experience of loyalty and devotion to one's native land one may find the God of his fathers. In later years Jesus shows little sympathy with the exclusiveness of the Jew and much with the universalism of the greater prophets. It was the religious patriotism of that prophet whose message he quoted in the synagogue of Nazareth that had taken possession of his heart. As every noble love leads to Him who is the source of all goodness, so the love of his own people led Jesus to God.

¹ II Kings 17 ff.

² Judges, chaps. 4 and 5.

V. The Carpenter Shop and the Town Life

"Is not he the carpenter's son?" So spoke his fellow-townsmen when he came to them as a prophet. Evidently they knew him as one of themselves. He had grown up in the artisan's home and had known life as it came to the child of the toiler.

This means, first of all, an experience of frugality. The common needs in the carpenter's home were met by careful husbanding of the slim financial resources of the family. Early the child knew that wants must be limited and that luxuries could not be expected. Such rigid economy may make life sordid and bitter or it may induce simplicity and gratitude. Poverty is terrible and tragic, and it is hard to rise out of it into noble character. But the humble home, where wants are few and the simple joys which cost little are cherished, may lead its children into beautiful trust and thankful acceptance of all that comes as from the hand of God. The experience of the Nazareth home produced the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." Jesus was following his life-custom when he took the loaves and the fish and blessed them. He found God in simple daily necessities and also in the beauty of life that does not have to be bought.

It is more difficult in some respects for the rich to train their children than for those of meager means. There is something in the co-operative struggle of a family that the most elaborate educational facilities cannot equal. Sympathy, appreciation, understanding, unselfish service may develop in these humble conditions as they can scarcely be secured where every advantage and luxury is available from infancy. So the child Jesus, in his comfortable but very simple home, sufficiently fed and cared for by the labor of Joseph, found life good and thanked God for daily blessings.

There was an experience of labor. The carpenter's shop was in the home. The boy Jesus saw the busy work with saw and hammer and plane from early childhood. He knew that the faithful father from early morning until sundown, with respite in the hot hours of the afternoon, worked to supply the family with bread. He knew that work is man's lot. If there were wealthy folk who lived in luxury, they were far from his way of life. Where he lived, men labored; and it seemed the natural thing to do. How early he may have helped in the simpler duties of the shop we cannot tell, but a vigorous child can do errands and carry small articles and clean up after work. Jesus' experience of labor, even in childhood, was not merely that of the on-looker; he had some part in it, in its burden, and in its reward. And, in company with the godly Joseph, he found God in toil.

Jesus entered also into the social experience which the carpenter's service to the community involved. Our children, who know only that father "goes to town" or "works in an office," do not have the first-hand sense of social contribution that is evident in personal service. There is a different condition in that Nazareth shop. A neighbor needs a new table for his home. There is consultation with the carpenter, agreement as to the material, size, and price. The child sees the table as it progresses; it is for the family of Abner, it must be well made, for Abner and his household will use it for many years.

The early Christian fathers suggested that Jesus' beautiful metaphor of the yoke (Matt. 11:28-30) came from his carpenter experience. A farmer brought his ox with the galled shoulder to the young carpenter. Careful examination revealed that the yoke did not fit. The ox was pulling the burden under needless difficulty. The skilled artisan took his plane and carefully changed the angles and curves of the yoke until it was "easy" on the neck of the ox. Life is so difficult when we pull and tug at its obligations; it is easy when we fit into its conditions and give all our strength to our duty.

Jesus was a youth before he could fit a yoke to the neck of an ox, but while still a child he could see his father at work ministering to the needs of the men who came for his help. Vocation as social service was therefore part of his childhood experience, and it was a good way to find God. Much of the difficulty of securing any religious interpretation of labor today is that our great industry is so impersonal. The man who turns a lever all day to effect a single modification in a construction process cannot feel much social relationship to the people who will use the finished product. So the sense of contribution is lost; and it is a great loss. In Joseph's shop they were helping their neighbors. Jesus grew up with this social interpretation of industry. It helped him to believe that God was seeking to make a kingdom of social living where each would work for his neighbor.

There was nothing unique about the town life of Nazareth. But life's meanings are quite as much in its commonplaces as in its high occasions. The Nazareth folk had to live together; so they were to meet in the market place, to exchange goods and services, to hear gossip and slander, to feel envy and rancour, to sympathize in sorrow and share the happiness of joy, to face misunderstanding and enmity, to join in co-operative enterprises. The children played together and helped one another and got hungry, shared their toys and good things, and stole the property of their companions. In short, human life, fine and mean, noble and contemptible, wholesome and sordid, ordinary human life, went on in Nazareth.

And Jesus was a part of this common activity. We are confident that he was a wholesome boy. He was good natured, co-operative, generous. He loved to do a good turn every day. He early learned the happiness of the spirit of forgiveness and love. You did not quarrel with Jesus. He was so surprised when you were mean that you changed your tone or went away. He played fair; it seemed to him the natural thing to do and you played fair with him. For God was very real to that boy. He believed that God loved goodness and kindness and was distressed by injustice and selfishness. He felt that it was for him to do what God would have all children do. When social strains came, when it was hard to hold back temper, to give way in a dispute, the Father seemed to speak to him, and he found the right way.

Jesus learned the Golden Rule in the common life of Nazareth. It was the natural, happy way to live. Luke tells us that "he grew in favor with God and with man." If Luke had been able to secure any direct information about the childhood of Jesus, this may indicate that people remembered the lad as friendly and co-operative.

VI. The Son of the Law

Jewish religious education culminates in the ceremonial of confirmation, which has much in common with the same ceremony as practiced by the Episcopal and Lutheran churches. The reader would be interested to consult a local rabbi and learn from him the procedure by which a Jewish boy today becomes a Son of the Law. It occurs at about the thirteenth year of age. Up to that time the father is responsible for the observance of the Law on the part of the child, as he is also obligated to see that he has proper instruction in the history of his people and in the meaning of the Jewish practices. At puberty it is assumed that the boy can assume these duties and responsibilities for himself. An appropriate ceremony is arranged to express this coming of age, an important part of which is often the appointment of the candidate to read the Scriptural lesson in the synagogue service.

How far this practice was in operation in Jesus' day it is impossible to know accurately. But in view of the fact that initiation ceremonies at puberty are very common and that the confirmation ritual was certainly in operation when the Jewish commentaries were prepared, it is quite probable that Jesus became a Son of the Law in early adolescence.

Very naturally there seems to be a connection between this maturing religious experience and the interesting incident so graphically told by Luke of the visit to the Temple at twelve years of age (Luke 2:41-51).

It was perhaps Jesus' first Passover in Jerusalem. We can imagine the eager interest of that journey, the identification of the site of famous Bible stories, the thrilling vision of the capital, where had centered so many of the great events of the national history, at last the wonder of the Temple, that masterpiece of marble and of shining gold. Any thoughtful boy would be stirred by such an experience; and to an unusual boy it would be an event that would make an epoch in his life.

It was natural enough that Jesus should find his chief interest in the Temple. There were wise men there who could answer his eager questions—questions which had puzzled the village rabbi. In the picnic-like life of the Nazareth caravan it was easy for a boy to be overlooked. Joseph thought Jesus was with the women, as the children always were. Mary thought he was with the men, as would be customary after confirmation.

But the lad was having a great religious experience. He was getting deeper into things that interested him than had ever been possible before. He was seeing visions, understanding God's message to his people, wondering what God's purpose might be for him. He was surprised, indeed, when his mother reproached him. His answer was an affirmation of the new meaning of life, "Why, didn't you know; of course I would be in the temple, the Father's house; I have been here all the time."

So Jesus had come to that religious awakening which so often closes childhood and opens the larger life of youth. It was, indeed, a regeneration, a new birth into a larger world, a new sense of God, a new experience of living with the Father. Formally and conventionally, he became Son of the Law, taking the responsibility of a Hebrew; more vitally he graduated from the simple religious trust and love of childhood into the consciousness that he was indeed a son of God.

These are very significant experiences for our boys and girls. They should not be conversions if we have trained them aright; certainly Jesus did not need to be converted. But they may, indeed, be regenerations as one attains a distinctly higher plane of religious experience. Children do not need the elaborate paraphernalia of revivalism to bring them into this higher experience. They can come to God as Jesus came, through some new opportunity of insight, some beginning sense of having a mission in the world, some ability to say with a new note, "My Father."

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the home customs that would first impress themselves upon the boy Jesus?
2. What was the mezuzah, and what did it signify?

3. How would Jesus' experience of his own father's love affect his idea of God?
4. Describe the Sabbath of Jesus' boyhood in his home.
5. Name and give the significance of each of the great festival seasons.
6. Suggest the main features of the synagogue service to which Jesus was accustomed.
7. In what way did the Jewish Scriptures enter into the education of the boys in the home?
8. What were the requirements of the Jewish schools, and when did a boy begin to go to school?
9. To what extent were the Scriptures studied in the schools, and what was the character of that study?
10. What suggestions have we in the teachings of Jesus concerning his interest in the out-of-door life to which he was accustomed?
11. How did the location of Nazareth influence Jesus' knowledge of the world of his day?
12. How would it help to make real the past history of his people?
13. In what way might labor and the need for it bring to Jesus an experience of God?
14. How might such a necessity also lead to a social experience?
15. What did it mean to become a "son of the law," and what portion of the gospel gives us the story of this crisis in the life of Jesus?
16. Discuss this event as a religious experience of God.
17. Review the study carefully, and suggest in what way a boy today might experience God through his home.
18. How might he gain religious experience today through religious institutions such as the church, the Christian holidays, etc.?
19. How can he gain an experience of God through education?
20. How can he gain experience of God through nature and other contacts of human life?

Study II

Jesus Finding God through the Decisions of Early Manhood

By EDWIN EWART AUBREY

The Gospels leave us with a gap in the account of Jesus' life just at those years that are of most interest to young men and women. We have no record of his adolescence except Luke's story of the visit to the Temple and what a deep impression it made on Jesus. Of the years of the "teen-age," of the early and middle twenties there is nothing said directly; but there is much to be learned from what followed them and from what preceded them.

For no life is able to bear fruit out of harmony with itself. It is true that "the child is father of the man"; and, by the same token, it is equally true that the young man is the father of the elder man. To know under what conditions a man's early life was lived, and how in later life he responded to the problems life set for him, is to know how he would react to the important events in his early manhood. This is how Jesus may serve as our guide in the perplexing decisions of early manhood and womanhood. He became the great personality of his early thirties because of what he had done in his twenties and in his teens.

I. Environment and Heritage

One thing stands out in every single incident of Jesus' later career: he was sensitive to the feelings and the needs of those about him. Some people need to be shouted at to become aware of another's needs: Jesus saw men's hurts and difficulties in their eyes before they said a word. How did he attain this rare insight in men's minds? How had he schooled his imagination to see what men were thinking about? On what sorts of problems had he been training this gift of imaginative insight that so many of us neglect?

What would a sensitive young mind of Jesus' day feel about the problems of his fellow-men and about his own part in tackling them?

The outstanding fact for a Galilean would be the subordination of the

whole Jewish people to a foreign rule. The Roman heel was in evidence everywhere. The merchant, bringing his wares into a city to sell, paid a tax to the tax-collector of the Roman government; the boy playing in the streets of a city saw the soldiers acting as police; the lawyer found that many legal cases appealed from a local Jewish council had to be tried by a Roman official. Study the following passages and see what Roman officials are mentioned: Matt. 9:9 (Why are publicans always spoken of with contempt in Matt. 9:10-11; 5:46; 11:19; 18:17; 21:32?); Luke, chap. 7; Matt., chap. 8; Matt. 5:41; 27:66 (in the Moffatt translation); and the rôle of Pilate in Jesus' trial. Everywhere, everywhere, were evidences of the political subjection of his own people: the proud Jews who had worshiped one God when the Romans were still paying crude reverence to local deities; the brave people who had, under the fiery Maccabees, routed the armies of the Greeks from Palestine. And now this nation was despised and exploited. Have you ever talked to a Filipino student, or to an educated man from India? If you can get them to talk about the political status of their people, you will gain some idea of what a young idealist of Jesus' stamp might feel.

In the face of these troubles which the Jewish nation faced, Jesus saw the Jewish leaders proving quite ineffectual. Some counseled violent revolt; but the masses were disorganized, the Romans watchful, and the powerful Jewish men of affairs indifferent. Others urged men to forget the hated Roman, to be superior to him, to avoid contaminating contact with the "foreign dogs," to trust in God to work a miracle for the deliverance of his people; the Pharisees were suggesting a policy of non-co-operation. Meanwhile the priestly officials of Judaism were for compromise with Rome for economic gain: the Zealots hated them, the Pharisees distrusted them, but the Sadducean priests held the whip. With such internal wranglings how could the Jews hope to improve their lot? Meant to be a "light to lighten the Gentiles," were they not rather a disgrace to their own traditions? A young man full of pride in his nation and eager for his ideals might well think so.

But such pride had been born in Jesus because he had learned his national history. Luckily for him it was not a history merely of battles and dynasties, but a history of the soul of his people. In the Prophets and in the Wisdom writings and Psalms (these latter were not made a part of his Bible till later, but they were known and loved) he had read of men's fears and hopes, of their failures in courage and their achievements of fine idealism, of their pettinesses and their lofty visions. Perhaps the greatest of these hopes was that some day God would raise the people of his choice to be the greatest, the finest, the most courageous

morally in the world. And this was to be done by a God-sent messenger called the Messiah. But this idea had been held for centuries and nothing had happened, and things were just about as bad as they could be; and so it was little wonder if men had doubts as to whether the Messiah was just another idle, impractical dream. Besides, there was a disheartening futility in all the attempts being made to restore the nation to a place in the sun. When Jesus was about ten, one revolt had ended disastrously; and since then the idealists were seething with discontent that accomplished nothing.¹

What a relief to read the old prophets as a contrast! There, now, were men with visions plus courage: Elijah refusing to haul down the flag of his faith merely for the sake of being politic; Amos reminding his own people to criticize themselves, not their enemies; Isaiah flaming with faith that lived through a lifetime of disaster, and finally proved to be right; Jeremiah working always for his people's good while they imprisoned him and tried to lynch him through misunderstanding, and always choosing to stay with his cause rather than accept attractive offers elsewhere. What young man with an ounce of adventure and idealism would not thrill to such personalities! How had such courage disappeared from among the Jews' religious leaders? What was the secret of the Prophets' power? Surely God was close to *them*. Was it because they found God in facing the problems of their own day and in making great decisions in the light of his will for men's greatest good and freedom?²

What is implied in the fact that some people mistook Jesus for a returned prophet like Elijah or Jeremiah? (Matt. 16:13-14). Compare the following passages in the Old and the New Testaments and note the common attitudes they show: Amos 3:6-16; Isa. 10:1-4; Jer. 22:13-19 with Luke 11:39-52. With the repeated failures of Isaiah's efforts compare the disappointments Jesus had to face; and the treatment of Jeremiah (Jer. 11:1-6, 19; chap. 26; 36:8-26; chap. 15; 37:11-38:13) with the sufferings of Jesus; also the fine loyalty of Jeremiah despite persecution (40:2-6) with Jesus' loyalty.

Where could such a young idealist begin? It was so easy to start out vigorously and then lose interest when the task became complicated and tiresome. If one were only born to affluence and could come quickly into the public eye, how much easier it would be. But Jesus had spent his

¹ For a description of the general social situation in Palestine in Jesus' day see W. R. Bowie, *The Master*, pp. 34-69; S. J. Case, *Jesus*, chap. iii; or Shailer Mathews, *History of New Testament Times in Palestine*.

² For an account of the heroic leadership of the Old Hebrew prophets, see G. L. Chamberlin, *The Hebrew Prophets*; J. M. P. Smith, *The Prophet and His Problems*.

boyhood among plain folk in a village of Galilee, and in those days Galilee was regarded by Jerusalemites as rather behind the times and provincial. He had no special educational advantages such as the great schools of the day might have offered. For him religion was not the splendid, impressive worship at the center of the national life, but the simple piety of a small country town. No vested choirs and eminent preachers in his young life; just some faithful rabbi for a synagogue of ordinary folk. How could anyone do big things, things that might make a dent on the national life, with a background like that?

Of course, Nazareth was along one of the main highways of Palestine, but it wasn't much of a stopping place. And when caravans or military detachments brought people of other races and other faiths, they did not tarry long. To be sure, Sepphoris was a Roman garrison town six miles away; but that took two hours and more each way with an ox-team, and one did not go often. In a word, a man would surely have to clear out of Nazareth if he meant to do big things—and the sooner the better. And yet, Jesus stayed there for thirty years. Perhaps he had learned already to make important decisions on ordinary matters. Was not God the God of simple folk and simple life as well as of battles and national policies and world-events? If so, might not one find him by meeting faithfully the challenges of routine living in one's family, one's trade, and one's village? So Jesus stayed. He met the responsibilities at home and grew by meeting them. That which was the noblest thing in home life became a symbol of God; and fatherhood was now a vivid ray of the divine.

II. The Meaning of God in Daily Life

Many young men and women become sensitive to the needs of those about them, but their sensitivity becomes often a morbid dissatisfaction that lapses into cynicism. For cynicism is a mask for lack of courage to tackle difficulties. People who give up before a big problem sometimes save their faces by laughing at the enthusiasm of others who are bold enough to try, and the pose of superiority is their cynicism. The most successful way to overcome such ineffectual cynicism is to make some definite decision to do something about the problem that confronts you. That was how Jesus transformed his sensitiveness into effective leadership.

If we assume that by the time he was twenty Jesus was keenly conscious of the troubles that had overtaken his fellow-countrymen, then he waited ten years before he did anything in a public way to meet those

troubles. Somehow or other Jesus kept up his enthusiasm, though he had no chance to express it till he was thirty years old. Was he getting ready? And if so, how?

From the events that followed, we may guess what he was doing. In his public career he drew upon resources that he had accumulated during those ten years: learning to see the meaning of God in the beauty of the hillside where, regularly, he used to go to pray; coming to understand how people's minds work in little things, for here he found the secret of their attitudes in matters of life and death; studying the Old Testament, the religious literature of his people, training himself to wait to understand folk before he condemned them, and thus gaining insight into the difference between hypocrisy and sincerity, between lack of sympathy and lack of knowledge. His instant and penetrating detection of sham or timidity or frantic grief behind a stolid face, was evidence of a skill acquired in long years of observation. His incurable habit of seeing people's good points was a product of long practice. His quick repartee in conversation with all sorts of men had become a skill when he talked with all sorts of folk in Nazareth. These skills are not sudden growths that spring up at once when the big chance comes. Jesus' great decisions were being made possible by his manner of living and thinking all through his twenties. Study, from this point of view, Mark 1:35; 6:46; 14:32-35—three prayers at critical decisions of his career. Note his conversations recorded in Mark 2:1-12; Luke 7:36-50; Mark 9:33-35; Luke 9:57-62; 12:13-21; 14:1-14; Mark 10:17-31; Matt. 21:23-27.¹

III. Finding God in Great Decisions

When the great day came, he was ready to meet it. Away down south by the Jordan River a curious figure was busy berating the evils of the day. He had appeared there suddenly from somewhere off in the desert east of the river. Reports of him spread abroad; he was a crazy fellow, people said, with his uncouth clothing and his savage diet of wild honey and locusts, and he ranted about the end of the world coming and about how those who wanted to escape God's blazing anger must hurry to get themselves spiritually ready before the Messiah should come to sift out the wicked from the good. Jesus decided to go down to hear him. Now that we know how very different the two men were from each other, it is the more surprising that Jesus went. Read Luke 3:1-20 and compare John's message with the sermon on the Mount in Matt. chaps. 5-7. It is

¹ On Jesus' intimate knowledge of the concerns of ordinary folk, see the study of his parables in T. R. Glover, *The Jesus of History*.

even more surprising that Jesus decided to join the little band of workers that John had gathered and that he signified this decision to join up by undergoing the rite of baptism. "When you see a good cause, jump into it," was the advice of a certain great man to young people; and this was what Jesus did. But what was the good cause that John represented? It was the revival of the power of religion through absolute honesty. John was a man who hated sham, and was courageous enough to condemn the king to his face for immoral conduct. (He was executed for this eventually. See the story in Mark 6:17-29.) Though Jesus did not fully agree with John in all his theological views, he was thrilled by the simple honesty of the strange prophet; and once, when, later on, Jesus had himself become more famous than John the Baptist, the Master said "No greater man was ever born of woman than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:7-15). In joining John's movement Jesus made an all-important decision; he decided to give all his energies to this messianic movement, which seemed to be the consummation of his dreams, and choosing it, he gave himself over wholly to the great cause. (Later, Jesus met a splendid young fellow of social prominence, the rich young ruler, who had been dreaming ideals too, but who had failed because he would not make real sacrifices for his ideal. Read the story in Luke 18:18-24.) In giving himself wholeheartedly to a fine cause, Jesus learned something about God that he could have learned in no other way; he felt that in making this decision he had discovered what it was to be a real son of the God of righteousness. To be sure, Jesus probably heard John say what others had heard him say too, that Jews might be born sons of Abraham but that they had to decide to become sons of the Heavenly Father. But how it actually *felt* he could not learn except by *doing*, by the decision to give his best to a great and perilous cause.

Jesus soon outgrew John's movement because his own conceptions were greater than John's; but the Gospel writers obeyed a sound principle when they emphasized that Jesus outgrew John's movement by growing out of it. Read Matt. 11:2-19 for Jesus' opinion of John's movement. Contrast the two leaders on the basis of the following passages: Mark 1:4, 5, and 1:39; Mark 2:18-19. For an indication of how John the Baptist's movement went its own way separate from Christianity, read Acts 18:24-19:5. Perhaps the tenderness of Jesus found some of its balancing of steel in the rugged honesty of John. But the great thing Jesus gained through joining John was the discovery of a cause to which to harness his idealism, and the discovery that enthusiastic commitment to a great cause brings one closer to God.

IV. Experience of God in the Struggle with Temptation

In the Gospel accounts of the baptism of Jesus one thing stands out very clearly: Jesus found in the hour of his commitment to this great cause, not only a new view of his own relation to God, but also a new accession of power. Modern psychologists, using quite different terms from those employed by the writers of the first century, tell us that when anyone finds a great purpose and ideal to unify his efforts, that man actually acquires new power. Religion has always maintained that in finding God men find greater power within themselves. To explain this experience they have spoken of the Holy Spirit working in men. Whether this was precisely the meaning of the Gospel stories of Jesus' baptism, it is very difficult to say, because Mark and Matthew and Luke differ on the details of this event considerably. At any rate, the very act of throwing his life into the good cause brought Jesus a new sense of God's power in a man's life as an inner force of adventurous idealism.

But even the recognition of new-found powers is a crucial event in any young man's life, and Jesus faced important decisions immediately. In the Gospels the story of this inner struggle is vividly told after the manner of the East in parables; and the accounts of the temptations which Jesus faced show the very process by which he came to increasing clarity in his understanding of what God is. Mark says nothing of the actual temptations; psychological analysis was not his strong point as a writer; he merely records that the days following Jesus' great life-decision were critical days (see Mark 1:12-13).

Matthew and Luke tell of three temptations. The first was the urge to use his new power for satisfying the obvious physical needs of himself and other men. Surely it was good to furnish bread when one had God-given power. The temptation story is, of course, condensed so as to telescope long days of hard thinking into problems and seemingly immediate answers. But in the exhausting struggle to decide, Jesus finally realized that "man shall not live by bread alone"; that human life is fraught with deeper hungers, beside which eating is a small thing. Even in this apparently simple conclusion Jesus added to the depth of his knowledge of God as found not in the mere satisfaction of animal needs but in the quest for the enrichment of all of life. What has been called "spiritual" as distinct from "material" life is here shown to be more inclusive than the physical. The spiritual life is man at his best in his fullest life.

In the temptation to use his power to secure prestige in the world, Jesus faced a trial that every man with power faces. The world of men

is full of enticing opportunities for a genius or a brilliant personality, if he will just forget his ideals and "do what he's told" or "be a good fellow." What did Jesus say to this? He recalled a quotation from the ancient Deuteronomic Law of the Hebrews, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Stick to your ideals; this was the answer to the problem. Loyalty to the cause and to its ultimate purpose was to be the mark of faithfulness to God. Jesus' God was no whit less exacting of one's best and one's whole-hearted devotion than John's.

Then there was the temptation to be reckless because God is good. "If thou art the son of God," said the tempter, "cast thyself down from hence" (the pinnacle of the temple), for it is written, "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee to guard thee. . . ." After all, if one were going about God's business, would not God see that he came to no harm? Wasn't that what a Father's love meant? Now, this was a crucial issue and in it lay the whole problem of what religious people call "Providence." Would loyalty to a cause in harmony with God's will guarantee safety? What might a loyal servant of the highest ideals of life expect from the universe? Would it not guarantee him a happy life? Did he have to live on a par with other men so far as the laws of nature and of human life were concerned? Did righteousness insure success? The answer that Jesus found to this problem was not an easy one to accept: Do not expect to find the world conforming to your wishes because you are doing your best. How this answer steadied Jesus in the face of criminal execution for his ideals a later chapter will show. If Jesus had not been realistic at this stage, he would never have borne up to the end. But in this realism he learned to know the God of law who makes the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust. The universe does not play favorites. Compare the accounts of the temptations given in Matt. 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. Try to write an up-to-date version of the temptations showing the way in which Matthew might make Satan speak to Jesus if he were writing the story today.¹

There is another incident which, while it is not included in the temptation narrative, is yet one of Jesus' early temptations. It is very simply told in Mark 1:35-38. Jesus had been telling his people about the great ideals which he hoped they would follow, and he had discovered his ability to help men overcome physical handicaps of one sort and another. It had been, from the standpoint of healing, a very successful day; crowds had come, scores had been healed, Jesus was fast becoming famous in

¹ To help with this, see W. R. Bowie, *The Master*, Part II, chap. iii.

the locality, all because of his great gift for healing men's bodies. The sick and the friends of sick folk sought him. Here was a form of service that showed results. Why not stay at it?

But the next morning at dawn the disciples, looking for the great physician, found the Master behind a rock in the desert praying. In his prayer he had been seeking an answer to this vocational problem; and when his admiring friends came to tell him what a crowd had gathered to be healed, his answer was ready: "Let us go elsewhere into the next towns that I may preach there also; for to *this* end came I forth." His was to be a preaching ministry and he would stay with his purpose despite the success of incidental activities. Out of such a decision as this, Jesus came to see God as a steady God, moving on, not capriciously, but consistently, to the fulfilment of great purposes.

No man comes to maturity except through the attainment of independent convictions. Every such threshold is a parting with some old friends, and the dearer the friends the more courage does it take to break away from their ideas. A man's real faith is often subjected to this as its most severe test, and many a man chooses friendship rather than intellectual honesty in the crisis. But there is another side to this problem. The ability of friendship to triumph over differences of judgment through granting freedom of belief is its rarest achievement. What about one's attitude toward "old-fashioned" parents, or toward ministers?

Jesus underwent just this acute crisis, and his decision gave him another glimpse of the meaning of God to him. For Jesus came to the conclusion that John the Baptist, despite the sincerity and the splendid vigor of his challenge to men to meet God's moral demands, was on the wrong track: that in John's preaching there was a mistaken conception of God. The prophet of the Jordan preached an irate God, unwilling any longer to meet men on their own ground but demanding that they come all the way if they wanted to find him, just as John stayed at the edge of the desert and made the crowds come to him. Jesus, on the other hand, having come to understand God through the outgoing love of a father for his family, was firmly convinced that God was *eager* to help men who sought him and that the Divine Father went in search of needy people. Jesus felt, accordingly, that a messenger of God ought to go into the villages and cities and synagogues where men were, to help them. It was a part of the nature of God that when men honestly sought him he showed himself ready to meet them. What would this imply regarding honest doubts?

From this decision to leave John, Jesus came to find in God a dependable factor in the universe, whom men might find in different ways

and in whom they might see different characteristics. In the light of the temptation which Jesus met and conquered—the temptation to expect special favor in return for goodness—this insight into the way that right action secures co-operation from the universe is the more remarkable. But in the decision Jesus also came to a reinforcement of his confidence that real friendship provides for honest differences and that the clue to real love in human relations is the willingness to see beyond the disagreements to the basic agreements of those who seek God and the god-like life for men. And so Jesus remained a true friend of the great teacher with whom he could not wholly agree.

V. Realization of God in Fidelity to Ideals

We have seen the growth of Jesus' understanding of God as it arose out of the regular sources of religious teaching in his day and developed as he adventured with these ideas in his own experiences. Jesus did not depend upon elaborate philosophical studies for tests of his religious ideas, he tried them in the contacts of home and shop and market place and town. Apparently his faith was more than a set of ideas: it was a passionate conviction that those ideas were worth betting his life on. Donald Hankey, a British officer killed in the World War, defined religion as "betting your life there's a God." Was this a good description of Jesus' attitude? How does this differ from the point of view represented in the temptation to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple? May it have been that the vigor of his faith was due precisely to the way he lived through crises with it? Psychologists tell us that when we get into tight places our emotions are aroused. Now, convictions are beliefs charged with emotion. May this explain how Jesus' convictions grew as his beliefs were subjected to great risks? Did he come to feel strongly about God in proportion as he deliberately risked a lot in behalf of the causes which he felt were in line with God's will?

Jesus' experience suggests first that religion becomes effective and one's idea of God becomes vital only as one is keenly sensitive to the needs of society in his own day. For, if one is to find God by making important decisions, one must know what life is really like in his own town and nation and in the world of his day. Jesus was socially wide-awake. Was this one reason why God was vital, a living reality, to him?

But one cannot test beliefs without having some to test, and these Jesus acquired from the resources of the past. In his teaching, the old prophets were made alive by his own social sensitiveness. See if you think Jesus might have spoken the following utterances from the old Hebrew prophets: Nathan's reproach of David in the story of II Sam.

11:2—12:14; Hos., chap. 6; Isa. 10:1-14; 28:9-17; Mic., chap. 3; 6:6-8; Jeremiah's plea for the famine stricken people who had persecuted him, chap. 14; the teaching about the inner core of religion, Jer. 17:5-10; 24:7; 31:33-34; and the ideas of divine justice in Ezek. 33:11-19; 34:11-31.

The decision he faced was not whether old ideas had any meaning. No one could live back into the past as sympathetically as he did without seeing how precious they had been. His decisive question was: Can they be as precious, as powerful in meaning, today? The first thing was to see what the idea of God *had* meant to men. This he sought through the grasp of religious history. But one cannot revel in other folks's enthusiasms alone. One must try them for one's self. (Note how Jesus took issue with religious traditions on some questions, Matt. 5:21-48.) These individual experiences come through the decisions which life compels us to make. One might almost say that a man's religion is the way he makes his important decisions. Certainly you can tell what a man's real, working idea of God is by the sort of decisions he makes in the issues of life.

Jesus took life, not solemnly, but seriously. But taking life seriously means taking real risks. This is very different from the sophisticated detachment of the man who lets others take the risks while he sits by "interestedly." Conviction never came from watching others. If God was to mean anything to Jesus, Jesus must *do* something about him.

Yet, participation does not mean complete subservience to others. Jesus devoted himself to John's movement without being bound to John's ideas of God. It is through such participation, with independence, that new heights are reached in religious history. Jesus gave the idea of God a clearer and richer content because he kept his intellectual independence while he shared the life of the religious movement of John.

Through the great ideal that he persistently followed, Jesus gained new power. His life was not torn by inner dissension, and so his energies were saved for social usefulness. "To this end came I forth," "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me"—such words sum up a disciplined life, able, as nothing else is, to understand an orderly consistent universe. Out of such idealism grew a steady, honest, sure faith in the worthwhileness of ideals in life. It was this very faith that constituted the core of Jesus' faith in God. The Son of Man might have nowhere to lay his head, he might lose his crowd and his reputation, he might be deserted by his dearest friends, he might even lose life; but he never lost confidence that his ideal was worth all the suffering it entailed. This splendid faith was buttressed by experiences of joy coming from the battle for those ideals, from decisions made at a sacrifice for the sake of them.

God stood to him for the vindication of the soundness of his ideals, and that was worth more than a short life. In his own faithfulness to his ideals he caught his deepest insight into the meaning of God: God is present wherever men decide for good causes at a sacrifice of ease or popularity or mere gain. And only when men have made such decisions, whether it be in private or in public life, can they understand why God was such a living presence to Jesus.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. By what process can we gain an insight into the period of the life of Jesus between his boyhood and his ministry?
2. In what ways did the Romans touch the civil and religious as well as the political life of Palestine in the days of Jesus?
3. How did the several Jewish religious parties react to these conditions?
4. What elements in the history of his people fed the national pride of Jesus and his contemporaries?
5. Name some of the great patriots whose lives would be familiar to Jesus and who would inspire him.
6. What were some of the social and religious ideals of these men?
7. What is likely to have been the attitude of Jesus toward his Nazareth friends and his daily life there as he grew to manhood?
8. What great spiritual characteristics might Jesus be cultivating there through this apparently "hum-drum" life and by what means?
9. Of what value was prayer to him?
10. What great preacher appeared in Jesus' early manhood?
11. What led Jesus to join the John movement?
12. By what rite did he signify his approval of reform?
13. Give your interpretation of the story of this experience.
14. Why was it inevitable that Jesus should outgrow the reform movement of John and start one for himself?
15. What did Jesus learn about God in giving himself to a great cause?
16. What discovery did he make in himself?
17. What is your interpretation of the spiritual meaning of the response of Jesus to the temptation to use his power as a means of securing prestige for himself?
18. What was his attitude toward the temptation to be reckless?
19. Why did he not devote himself exclusively to healing men's bodies, and how did the different decision lead him to a deeper knowledge of God?
20. How did the difference between Jesus' experience of God and that of John show itself in their programs of action?
21. In order to share in the work of a great movement, should one forfeit one's own independent ideals?
22. What is necessary if we would increase our experience of God as Jesus increased his?

Study III

Jesus' Experience of God in Fellowship with the Sick, the Helpless, and the Afflicted

BY DONALD W. RIDDLE

I. Jesus' Genius for Fellowship

Jesus, when he entered upon the career which he had chosen, did not become a desert-frequenting ascetic as did John the Baptist. He mingled with his kind, not merely as they came to him, but going to them. He lived with them not only in countryside and village, but in the populous city centers. He limited himself to no class, no race, no one religious group. He had fellowship with the wealthy and the poverty-stricken, with the native and the foreigner, with the learned and the ignorant. Nor did the limits of respectability keep him out: he was the associate of prostitutes, renegade Jewish tax-collectors, and of every type of disapproved person implied under the collective word "sinner." Much of his significance as a religious person was gained from these contacts; in his fellowship of service to the socially disapproved, the economically disadvantaged, the sick, the helpless, and the afflicted Jesus experienced God. Much of the teaching ascribed to him was based upon those experiences of God so derived and conditioned.

It was natural that Jesus should have come to some such experience, for it was an important part of the tradition of his people to have care for such persons. Our own knowledge of the Old Testament will furnish abundant illustration of the ancient idea that it was well pleasing to God to do kindly by the unfortunate. But the rapidly growing body of traditional interpretation of the Scripture by Jesus' immediate predecessors and by his contemporaries notably increased that interest. Judaism was always humanitarian in its expression. Further, as shall be seen presently, the Jewish people lacked many of the grotesque ideas and customs with reference to sickness and misfortune which characterized gentile thought. Many Jews had impulses similar to those of Jesus, and expressed them in teachings very like his.

But Jesus went further. He had a genius for fellowship which in large

part made him what he was. Consider the contrast between John and Jesus at this point. Both were Jews; both were dynamically religious. But John was a rigorist, an ascetic, a desert-dweller. Jesus was a friend who lived pleasantly where many people were, and there practiced an inclusiveness of friendship which amazed his contemporaries and which has always been notable to his successors.

II. His Fellowship Inclusive

It requires but little reflection to appreciate the amazement of Jesus' contemporaries at the inclusiveness of his fellowship. It is hardly usual for a well person to spend a considerable portion of his time with people who are sick. Physical disability is almost inevitably a bar to friendly association; one does not commonly walk with a lame man. Speech with those who have impediments of one or another sort is not easy, and as a rule the blind repel those who see. Among ourselves it is the unusual person who is distinguished for the gift of visiting the sick or associating with the infirm; it is unusual when such a person is of benefit to the sick or when he himself derives value from such visitation. But such practice, though it is unusual, is highly approved; and its devotees receive not a little commendation. But Jesus went beyond this. His list of *friends* included all sorts of disapproved persons. Even in our day, when excessive nationalism is balanced by a rare internationalism it is in many circles questionable when one associates with a foreigner, particularly when the foreigner is of a different color or race. As a rule, our religious groups develop certain alignments of social or economic class so that it is remarkable when there is genuine mixture of status. And at all events it is expected that the proprieties of respectability shall be preserved. The religious person does not have fellowship with crooks, thieves, gluttonous and intemperate persons, or prostitutes.

But Jesus did. It is an aspect of his life, as told in the gospel stories, which is worthy of the closest study. For his relations with these people were in no sense professional. In Jesus' day there was no pattern, such as is familiar to us, of the relation between a pastor and his flock. The rabbi never made professional calls. If someone had a religious problem to discuss with a rabbi he called upon the teacher, and the problem discussed would in any case be intellectual. Consequently, the friendly relation between Jesus and these declassed persons was, so far as can be determined, unique. There was nothing professional about it, the relation existed because of a fundamental sympathy. Jesus had these experiences because he was the sort of person who enjoyed them.

Let us, then, study this matter further. What examples of such contacts are related in the gospel stories? Note the story related in Mark 2:15-17. Jesus, having recently called Levi (better known as Matthew) to his service, celebrates the occasion by a dinner in his home (compare the Goodspeed translation, undoubtedly correct here).¹ Among his guests are several of those despised Jewish renegades, the tax-collectors, who had completely lost caste with their fellow-Jews when they, as was bitterly said, sold out to the service of Rome. There were also those who are referred to under the general classification of "sinners." These were the people invited to Jesus' home, with whom he had table fellowship! When others looked askance at this, Jesus justified his practice by a homely proverb to the effect that he as a religious person associated with people who needed religious fellowship!

The character of these persons is suggested by other gospel stories. Read Luke 7:36-50, a story in which the contrast between the highly respectable and the lowly sinner is effectively told, with the unqualified sympathy of Jesus for the latter. Doubtless it was his sympathy for such persons, a sympathy which was gained from actual contacts with them, which is the basis for such generalized teaching as is found in the parables of the lost (see Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7, 8-10, 11-32) and such parables as use for illustration social contacts with those outside the pale (Luke 14:16-24; Matt. 22:1-14). Undoubtedly Jesus' association with people of all sorts taught him human values, and he was able to believe in the possibility of even tax-collectors and prostitutes being included in the kingdom of God.

It is a special emphasis of the Gospel according to Luke that Jesus had a very particular sympathy with the poor. Not that this Gospel suggests that his associates were limited to this class: it is Luke who frequently reports Jesus as the house guest of well-to-do persons. But note the beatitude on the poor (Luke 6:20; cf. 6:24), the announcement in an early address (4:18; cf. 7:22), the message of the parables (12:13-21; 16:19-31), the direct instruction (14:13, 14), and the implied example (19:8). This interest is found in Mark (12:41-44) in a story which is told also by Luke (21:1-4).

¹ He was at table in his house, with many tax-collectors and irreligious people who were at table with him and his disciples, for there were many of them among his followers. And when the scribes who were of the Pharisees' party saw that he was eating with irreligious people and tax-collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax-collectors and irreligious people?" Jesus heard it, and said to them, "It is not well people but the sick who have to have the doctor. I did not come to invite the pious but the irreligious."

III. Stories of Jesus' Healing the Sick

It is clear that since the association of Jesus with the poor is emphasized in the Gospels, it must be noted by us. But it is when we are called upon to observe Jesus' fellowship with the sick, the infirm, and the afflicted that we reach the heart of this aspect of his experience of God. The examples are numerous. Mark early includes this type of story in his gospel (1:22-27 is a typical example, with which may be compared 5:1-20). This type, which concerns the expulsion of "evil spirits," is perhaps distinct from stories of dealing with folk who were suffering from diseases as we understand the term, and of which symptoms are definitely recognizable. The examples of the latter are very numerous. Simon's mother-in-law had a fever, Mark 1:30; Matt. 8:14; Luke 4:38; a leper is healed, Mark 1:40-45; Matt. 8:1-4; Luke 5:12-16; a paralytic is brought by his friends, Mark 2:1-12; Matt. 9:1-8; Luke 5:17-26; a woman is cured of a hemorrhage, Mark 5:25-34; Matt. 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48; deafness is cured, Mark 7:31-37; Matt. 15:29-31; as is also blindness, Mark 8:22-26, 10:46-52; Matt. 9:27-31, 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43; an epileptic is restored to health, Mark 9:14-29; Matt. 17:14-20; Luke 9:37-43. Beside these stories of specific infirmities, there are many references of a general sort (see Mark 1:32, 34; Luke 4:40; Mark 3:10, 11; Luke 6:19, 8:2; Mark 6:5). Sometimes cases which suggest injury are cited, as, for example, the man with a "withered" hand, Mark 3:1-6; Matt. 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-11, or the woman who was deformed, Luke 13:10-17. That cripples and congenitally incapacitated were implied as among Jesus' acquaintances is clearly suggested by such references as Luke 14:13, 21.

What do these accounts suggest? One difficult problem must be faced in the beginning. These gospel stories are all of the "miracle" category, and the implication of this needs to be noted. To be sure, since our interest is in what Jesus learned of God from these contacts, the question of miracle is not of primary importance for us. Not that it is to be evaded. Far from it! One of the first attitudes which one should take is the steadfast refusal to attempt to rationalize these stories in some manner so that they cease to be miraculous. It must be clearly recognized that the Gospels intend them to be understood as miracles, and it is doing violence to the integrity of the sources to attempt to explain away the miraculous element in them. It may be that moderns have a conception of God working through law which makes it impossible for them to accept these stories as fact, but it must be admitted that the gospel writers alleged the power of Jesus to operate miraculously. Let us, then, recognize that

the aspect of miracle in these stories is the inevitable character of the gospel sources, which were produced in the prescientific age when our conception of natural law was unknown. In the scientific age Jesus may perhaps be understood differently, but Jesus as he is pictured by the gospel writers was understood according to the ideas current in that age.

This is true not only of what we should call physical diseases but also of those mentally diseased who were said to have been possessed of evil spirits. Belief in such possession was all but universal in the ancient world. It was thus that they explained insanity, hysteria, and various other pathological conditions which are now treated by psychoanalysts or psychiatrists. Jesus never questioned this explanation of disease, but devoted himself to curing it. His methods are those which are in accord with the belief; but he did not attempt exorcism or any ritual performance, but cured by direct suggestion. There was in him a remarkable ability to induce the demonized to believe that the evil spirits had left them, and they were thus restored to health.

Probably the final result of the critical study of these stories, regarded as miracle stories, will be slight for our purpose. One should, without doubt, conclude that Jesus, as well as the gospel writers, believed himself capable of operating miraculously. What this belief meant for him is a part of our problem, not a matter to be assumed at the outset.

We must also approach this aspect of the religious experience of Jesus on the basis of customs current in his time, and, so far as his own experience is concerned, in his place. It is quite apparent that the Jews of Palestine in the time of Jesus thought that there was a direct relation between illness or infirmity of any sort and God. In general it was thought that the person whose standing with God was right would be blessed with prosperity, health, a large family, and happiness. When loss of prosperity, calamitous death, or loss of health came upon a person (as, for example, in the case of Job), the simplest explanation was that there was something wrong in the person's relation with God. The rabbis commonly explained the leprous death of Uzziah, II Kings 15:1-7, for example, or the illness of King Hezekiah, II Kings 20:1-6, on this basis. It followed, so long as this simple explanation could be maintained, that the ideas of the treatment or cure of illness were equally simple: let the afflicted person establish the right relation with God and his affliction will disappear. This belief had the very important effect of making the practice of medicine quite unusual and unpopular in Palestinian Judaism. A sick person ought to be restored to health by prayer and obedience of the Torah rather than by the operation of drugs or nostrums. Surgery was practically unknown among the Jews, although it was prac-

ticed in ancient Babylonia. To be sure, it was apparent in many cases that admittedly good persons suffered from illness, but in the main the simple explanation that illness was caused by unsatisfactory relation with God was maintained.

There was, then, among the Jews of Palestine nothing of the grotesque or the fantastic in the treatment or cure of disease that is commonly known to have characterized Greek and Roman life. In Palestinian Judaism the physician was not a common figure; and the use, much more the practice, of medicine was frowned upon. It is true that Jews outside Palestine, responding to the customs of their environment, were more hospitable to the use and practice of medicine; but the background of Jesus lacked this feature. Presumably Jews owed generally good health to the salubriousness of their climate and to the beneficial effect of their strictly prescribed dietary regimen. But however this may have been, there was excellent background in his contemporary Judaism for the ideas which seem to have actuated Jesus in his frequent attempts to be helpful to the afflicted by bringing them into right relation with God.

Of course the matter was different among the Greeks and Romans. The Greeks celebrated the name of Hippocrates, a great physician, whose code of ethics is maintained in an adapted form by physicians today. They even more revered Asklepios. Indeed, so great was his fame that he was regarded as among the gods, and the continuation of the practice of healing in shrines of Asklepios was at once a religious and a sanitary exercise. In the Roman time Galen was highly thought of also. As the result of the influence of famous physicians a considerable body of tradition had grown up with reference to the treatment of illness, some of it not unscientific, some of it positively nauseating in the content of approved prescriptions. But what needs to be emphasized in noting the customs of Jesus' gentile contemporaries is that whether specifics were used or not, the treatment of illness was almost always regarded as a religious matter. Far more potent, it was generally thought, were the wonders wrought at a shrine of Asklepios than the medicines prescribed by traditional practice. A sick man would be much more likely to resort to an Asklepios shrine, or a shrine of Isis, than to a mere physician. The man who was restored to health ascribed the marvel to a divine aid rather than to medicine.

Indeed, it was far more usual for healing to be accomplished by someone invoking the name of a deity than for a medicine to be used. In fact, so thoroughly committed was the Graeco-Roman world to the practice of cure by exorcism that no practice of ancient times is better known. Numerous examples of magic formulas have been unearthed, so that

magical papyri are familiar museum pieces. The essential element betrayed by them is the pronunciation in every conceivable manner, so that it might be certain that one form, at least, would be the correct one, of the name of some supposedly powerful god. Curiously enough, these frankly pagan documents often contain these experiments at the pronunciation of the unknown name of the God of the Jews. Presumably, when the sufficiently potent name was correctly pronounced in a command of expulsion of the spirit of illness, deafness, blindness, or what not, the individual afflicted became well.

IV. Jesus' Experience of God in Healing the Sick

It is against such fantastic notions as these that the gospel stories of Jesus' experiences with the ill, the infirm, and the mentally afflicted must be viewed. Two questions immediately emerge. First, since much in these stories is intelligible only in the light of a gentile background, one must ask which of them actually in any sense represents the experiences of Jesus. And second, of those which may reasonably be taken as representing the historical Jesus, it must be asked, What was the significance of these experiences for him? What do they enable us to learn about his experience of God?

First there must be emphasized the simplicity of Jesus' attitude in his capacity as a friend of the afflicted. It is remarkable that so little in these stories has to do with set forms of procedure, or with specific formulas of curative pronouncement, or with medicinal means for the effecting of cures. Study the gospel stories with this in mind. What can be found of the use of means for example, Mark 8:23? What can be discovered concerning any essential conditions of successful healing? Read Mark 2:5; Matt. 9:28; Mark 9:23; 6:5, 6. Can anything in the nature of a formula be found (see Mark 1:25; 9:25; 9:29)? What, so far as can be learned from these stories, was required other than or in addition to a genuine and an adequate faith in God? Clearly there is no suggestion of the use of repulsive medical preparations. This is not to suggest any doubt on the part of Jesus or his Jewish contemporaries of the potency of drugs. It is, rather, their simple trust in the power of the religious life. Nor does Jesus seem to have used the means of exorcism which are so well known from the magical papyri. If he personalized the supposed evil spirit, as doubtless he did, his command that it should leave the sick man was based upon the simple trust that the command, uttered in the implicit confidence of the power of God, was sufficient without the mumbling of exorcising formulas. It seems that in cases

where it was possible he expected the sick person to have faith in God. But whether he did or no, it is clear that Jesus had this faith and was convinced that it was enough. The simple faith of Jesus was that God was strong enough to effect a cure when he was besought to do so. God was the mighty power of the world, and what God willed was done.

The experiences of Jesus in healing the sick convinced him that he was experiencing God. The power which he exercised he did not think originated in himself but in God. His consciousness of his mission he explicitly described as due to this experience. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," he said, "because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor." Furthermore, if he healed those who were possessed of unclean spirits, it was by the finger of God. When the Pharisees attributed his power to Beelzebub, he warned them against such misinterpretation of the work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, wherever one finds Jesus acting, it is fair to say that he got a new sense of the presence of God in his own experience. It suggests that Jesus carried into practice a principle which he taught—that those who were capable of becoming like little children were capable of living in the kingdom of God. Jesus did not have anything like our scientific equipment of knowledge or our scientific attitude, but, lacking these, he maintained a simple trust in God rather than a repertoire of magical practices.

Second, it may be well to restate a point which was made in the beginning. The numerous stories of the association of Jesus with declassed people, as well as with respectable ones, unquestionably suggests that such association was a deliberate choice of his and was an association which gave him satisfaction. The extraordinary range of his friendships is not only remarkable but instructive.

Even more important is the attitude which Jesus seems to have maintained with these unfortunate associates. It was said of a certain social worker, "What was remarkable about him was his *respect* for the poor." This revealing remark immediately reminds one of Jesus. There is no note of condescension, no suggestion of an assumed or asserted superiority, no harshness, no rebuke, as the stories picture Jesus with these of his friends. Can one go so far as to extend an attitude expressed in another connection to this relationship? All three of the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 3:31-35; Matt. 12:46-50; Luke 8:19-21) tell that upon one occasion, when Jesus was surrounded by a crowd of people, his mother and his brothers sought to approach him. When he was told of this he said, with an inclusive gesture, See my mother and my brothers! Anyone who does the will of God is my mother, my sister, my brother!" Can we conclude that Jesus maintained this mystical attitude toward these afflicted?

Here lies the secret of Jesus' motivation in his friendship and his assistance of such persons.

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in the synagogues and preaching the good news of the kingdom, healing all kinds of diseases and all sorts of sickness. For when he saw the crowds he was moved with compassion for them, for they were distressed and scattered, like sheep which have no shepherd. Then he was saying to his followers, . . . "Pray, then, that the Lord . . . send out workers," Matt. 9:35-38.

It was a deeply humanitarian motive, actuated by deeply stirred feelings, which led Jesus to associate with the afflicted; and, once extending his interest in them, he derived satisfaction from the experience. In following this motive he felt himself given new power by this Spirit of God.

Doubtless what was remarkable about the way in which Jesus' capacity for friendship expressed itself was that his associations included persons who were at best unattractive and at worst repulsive. The skin disease which is probably misnamed as leprosy was ugly, the mental derangements which were understood as possession by evil spirits were disturbing, and, very likely, the spiritual and physical ailments of the motley crowds of "sinners" were anything but pleasant. But Jesus was not turned away from contacts with these persons. So far as can be observed, he maintained the same respect for these as he did for others. More than this, the tradition back of the saying (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34), "The son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, he is a glutton and a wine drinker, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!'" would suggest that Jesus enjoyed their company.

This certainly suggests that the ultimate reason for this aspect of Jesus' life was that his associations were religious experiences, that in his contacts with declassed persons he had a genuine experience of God. It can easily be pictured how, seeing them, and being moved with compassion, his simple relationship to God would suggest to him that in fellowship with them he was experiencing God. What must be emphasized is that in this range of human contacts there was nothing more than the genuine expression of friendship, with nothing of the professional. It is one of the highest tributes to the Jesus of the Gospels that he was not repelled by the ugly aspect of disease, and that in spite of all the debasing effects of wrong living he could be called the friend of renegade and sinner.

V. Sharing with Jesus in Experience of God

What suggestion does this aspect of the life of Jesus have for us today? It must be recognized, in the first place, that in one area of experience

there has been so fundamental and radical a change that our life is totally different from the life of Jesus' day, and requires a completely different attitude and range of activity. In place of the pre-scientific notions of the treatment of illness, leading to the grotesque and fanciful practices so common in the ancient world, we have today a body of medical knowledge which is based upon scientific observation and which therefore is treated very differently. We have, too, a conception of God which has greatly modified our ideas of the cause of illness. We cannot explain, nor can we propose to treat illness as simply as Jesus and his contemporaries treated it and explained it. We will trust our scientific knowledge, and make use of it.

Similarly, we have an increasingly large body of sociological knowledge. We cannot take the same attitude toward poverty as did Jesus and his fellows. The same is true of many social ills. We now think of such a phenomenon as prostitution as a whole, while we think of the particular problem of prostitutes and their clients individually, and we know that to deal with it we must proceed on the basis of our knowledge of social cause and effect. Because our life is more complex, we view and attack many problems differently. Sin, for example, is a vastly more difficult problem in our complex age.

We must proceed in our day on the basis of our scientific attitude, in so far as it is possible to do so. As the physician in Ibsen's *Enemy of the People* knew, it is idle to treat the individual cases of fever when there is left undrained a swamp which breeds the carriers of infection. So, too, sociological experts are able to prove to us that it is idle to treat individual cases of delinquency and crime while the forces which lead to abnormal behavior are undisturbed. It is essential in any such case to proceed on the basis of our scientific attitude and to act upon our scientific knowledge.

But to recognize these facts does not in any sense suggest that there is no place in our life for following the example of Jesus in the aspect here studied. One point immediately appears. The basic attitude of Jesus is still highly to be desired in our common life. Just as he, in contrast to John, went where people were, and there had fellowship with all sorts and conditions of them—just as he had a fundamental genius for friendship, so that he could obtain satisfaction from association with the lowly and the afflicted—so can anyone who can do or learn to do this bring into our social life a valuable quality. It would without question be a great contribution to human happiness if the number of those who are capable of bringing cheer to an invalid's room were increased, and if there were

more who would venture to go beyond the limits set by the boundaries of social status.

While, fortunately, exceptions can be named, it is generally true that one result of our trust in the scientific method of the treatment of physical and social ills is the production of classes of professional men who regard their work as a class occupation (or, as they would say, a profession) limited to those who qualify technically for it, closed to all others. Further, and still more serious, there is a general tendency to regard the persons treated quite impersonally, as "cases." The recognition of this fact makes it pleasant to think of such notable exceptions, as Dr. Grenfell. In Africa there is another: Dr. Albrecht Schweitzer is one of the most remarkable men of our day. He holds a Doctor's degree in three fields— theology, music, and medicine. He is the author of some of the most influential volumes in New Testament science. He is one of the world's greatest interpreters of Bach on the organ. But his major activity is the work of a medical missionary in Africa. As much of the time as possible he is in his hospital; but when it is necessary, he stops his work there and goes to Europe, where he lectures and gives organ recitals while raising the money to finance his hospital. It would be possible to cite other examples, but these are enough, for these have already suggested to us the similarity of this spirit to the spirit of Jesus. It is this spirit which is one of the great needs of our day.

Professor Ernest DeWitt Burton, in his class on "The Teaching of Jesus," used to offer as one of the generalizations of the course that the fundamental emphasis of Jesus was upon the ultimate value of persons. This is an emphasis which constantly needs to be affirmed. To be sure, what was of special significance in the experience of Jesus was that to him there was value in sick and sinful persons. In other words, it was a notable part of his religious attitude to insist that these were persons. That is why from his contacts with them he found himself experiencing God. To what extent can this be paralleled today? Such was the point of Channing Pollock's play, *The Fool*. But where in actual life can this literary exposition be illustrated? In the work of Grenfell and Schweitzer, doubtless. But the search for more areas of illustration only points the more insistently to the need for the bringing into modern life of this fundamental attitude.

To turn one's attention to the opposite end of the scale, it is equally true that Jesus' simple attitude of trust in God is one which needs affirmation today. It is obvious that the same conception of God cannot be maintained. Our scientific knowledge makes this impossible. We know more, and we know differently. But that attitude of trust is not out-

grown. What is required is that together with our increasing knowledge there shall be a growing conception of God. Let scientific knowledge modify this as it will; but let us see to it that we develop an adequate conception of God, and with it maintain this attitude which was so important in Jesus' life. To take an example, the scientific notes of Leonardo da Vinci are remarkable for their anticipations of modern scientific experiment and observation. But it is characteristic for the report of an experiment to conclude with the genuinely religious (to be sure, it was unorthodox) ejaculation, "Oh, thy wondrous justice, thou First Mover! No force dost thou deprive of the order and quality of its inevitable actions. Oh, thou divine Necessity, thou compellest all effects to flow out of their causes in the shortest way!" This is a suggestion of the presence in the one life of the genuinely religious and the perfectly scientific attitude. It, too, suggests that the attitude of Jesus may be brought to bear in modern life.

Perhaps the most necessary, as it is the least commonly found and the most difficult of the attitudes of Jesus to apply in modern life, is that which he obtained from his Jewish heritage. We modern members of Western civilization are basically individualists until the few of us learn better. Jesus, as was shown above, began with the opposite assumption. Undoubtedly it was one of the most creditable aspects of Judaism, which he naturally shared, that it was basically social, that its individuals were regarded and regarded themselves as parts of the national whole, possessing value only in that relationship. That this assumption caused Jesus to associate with people who by most of us are not popular, so that he quite naturally and unprofessionally operated on a basis for social welfare and amelioration, compellingly suggests to us the bringing of a similar attitude into our life. Translated into modern terms, it requires our perception that it is necessary, when aid is given a poor person, that attention ultimately be given the social problem of poverty, that it is necessary, when a delinquent is being saved from the danger of becoming a prostitute, that the social causes of prostitution be investigated. This will of course bring into the range of attention the whole range of very difficult problems, but such is the necessity when the attitudes of Jesus are being translated into terms of our day. It is an achievement of the highest order when there can be brought into one and the same person the practice of friendship which Jesus had and the scientific treatment of social ill which has been developed by his successors.

Highest of all spiritual achievements is that mystical discovery which is ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels. He was said to have found God from his association with his fellows, among them the lowly, the sinful, the

afflicted. He found God there because of a genuine sympathy, a "feeling with" them, as the word means in its etymology. Therein lay one of the secrets of Jesus' religious greatness. It is a greatness which has had its parallels since. Why cannot it have many parallels today?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Compare Jesus with John in his relations with the people about him.
2. What seems to have been the basis of the friendships of Jesus?
3. Briefly describe three instances told of or by Jesus which illustrate Jesus' sympathy with declassed persons.
4. Give evidences suggesting his attitude toward the poor.
5. Why were such attitudes in Jesus so remarkable?
6. Indicate the wide range of the healing acts of Jesus.
7. Why are all these acts described as miracles?
8. What theory of illness and of its cure prevailed among the Jews of Palestine?
9. How did the practice of Jesus in making cures accord with this idea?
10. What, in Jesus' conception of God, gave him complete confidence in his own power to heal?
11. What attitude toward the sick and helpless lay back of Jesus' willingness to help them?
12. How did his experience in associating with the diseased and in healing and comforting people enter into his own experience of God?
13. How has science changed the attitude of people toward the cause and cure of illness since the days of Jesus?
14. Illustrate by our method of handling contagious diseases.
15. What has helped us to new conceptions of the cause and cure of social ills?
16. What do we mean by a "scientific" handling of crime?
17. How then can the example of Jesus help us to experience God in our relations with our less fortunate fellow-men?
18. What danger is there in the professional attitude toward "cases"?
19. How can we combine the perfectly scientific and the genuinely religious attitudes?
20. How can we combine the practice of friendship with the scientific treatment of social ills?
21. How will our efforts in these directions help us to enlarge our experience of God?

Study IV

Jesus' Experience of God in His Contact with the Political Conditions of His People

BY SHAILER MATHEWS

I. The Imperial Control of Rome

So far as we know, Jesus never entered politics. Yet he lived in the midst of a world that was the center of political agitation and even violence.

Jesus was born at the dawn of one of the great periods of history, the foundation of the Roman Empire. For thousands of years the shores of the Mediterranean had developed city states, some of which had developed into empires—all of them into independent political units. Their history was one of continuous warfare. One nation had conquered another; one city had destroyed its rival. The eastern end of the Mediterranean, formed by Palestine and Syria, had been the center of many such struggles. Most of the great conquerors had marched across its territories, and many of them had fought in the great plain of Esdraelon. Alexander had attempted to give some sort of unity to the Near East and Greece; but his empire had divided at his death into warring nations, many of them with rival dynasties. The history of Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor had been one of all but continuous war. And then Rome, another city on the Mediterranean, emerged in history, newcomer on the political stage.

The lands bordering on the western end of the Mediterranean had no such history as those at the eastern end. Nineveh, Babylon, Egypt, cities in the Maritime Plain of Palestine, Jerusalem, Tyre, and Sidon had civilizations extending over thousands of years; but the little town established by strong-armed shepherds on some hills by the side of the Tiber had no such record. But in the warfare between the little towns, and then the cities of Italy, Rome had steadily emerged the victor. Gradually she brought order into the entire peninsula and began to expand overseas. There she came in contact with Carthage, another city-state, vastly more wealthy and with at least one great leader. For

generations they fought; and at last Rome, almost conquered by her rival, was victorious.

Her frontiers stretched on toward Greece, and she conquered Greece. By the middle of the first century of our era she had spread westward and conquered Gaul, as she had already conquered Spain. Then she had taken all of the territory on the eastern end of the Mediterranean. For the first time in the history of man peace descended on the Mediterranean countries. The only question left was as to who should rule this enormous territory that stretched from the Atlantic to the Arabian Desert. At first Rome undertook the task in accordance with her republican methods. But they proved impracticable. Political rivals soon became military rivals; and for years Rome, while establishing peace among the nations, was herself engaged in civil war. Really it was more than civil war, for it was in the nature of a revolution. There was no precedent for establishing an empire except that of war. The people of the widely separated provinces had no rights of suffrage in the republic. The relatively few Roman citizens who had such vote were incapable of extending municipal politics to the Mediterranean world. So far as we can judge human probabilities, it was inevitable that the need of a centralized government powerful enough to control millions of men would lead to a one-man power. And this took place when a young man, Octavius, later known as Augustus, conquered his rival Antony, and placed himself at the head of the state. He did not take the title of king. The old forms of the republic continued; but all power was in his hands because he controlled the army and the priesthood, but quite as truly because he was a man of great resources, wisdom, and efficiency. Mussolini must have studied his career.

All this had taken place a few years before the birth of Jesus. During his boyhood—in fact, during his entire life—the Roman state was strengthening its administrative methods and institutions in the Near East. By trial-and-error method Rome succeeded in bringing order and unity into all these quarrelsome nations without destroying the sense of national history or national identity. So thoroughly successful was she in this regard that no army was necessary in many of the provinces; and in the others where it was required it was hardly more than a police force and frontier guard. Rome had disarmed the world and was binding it together by political administration, commerce, and culture. Ancient laws were kept; national institutions that did not threaten disorder or rebellion were permitted; religious sensitiveness was respected. The Roman law was in a way superimposed upon local native law.

This marvelous change, which so stirred men who, like Virgil, actually

saw it accomplished, was not due to political philosophies but to men with practical political minds, like Gallio, who was perfectly ready to see a mob beat up a Jewish rabbi provided they did not further disturb the city peace. Read Acts 18:12-17. Roman administration was ultimately based on force. The conquered nations were unable to revolt because they had been disarmed. Roman officials were very frequently, if not generally, tainted by graft; but they were always liable to recall and punishment. The Romans set out to give unity and peace as well as to gain tribute, and they succeeded.

II. The Political Situation in Palestine

Among all the conquered people the Jews were almost the only ones who submitted with ill grace. Their religion was a constant incitement to nationalism. Jerusalem had enjoyed a brief period of independence and prosperity under the Maccabees. These bright years seemed to the Jews a restoration of the glories of the shadowy reign of David. But Rome had conquered and had established first a military occupation and then an administration supported by a small military force, with headquarters at Caesarea and garrisons in a few cities, particularly at Jerusalem. Strictly speaking, however, Jesus was not a subject of Rome. He was a citizen of Galilee, which, though under Roman control, was ruled by Herod Antipas with the title of tetrarch.

This little political unit was about the size of an American county. We do not know how many inhabitants it had, although Josephus gives some astonishing figures. He says, for instance, that there were something like 240 towns, besides 40 walled cities. That the population was dense can be read from the ruins today. Around the lake of Galilee, a beautiful sheet of water 600 feet below the level of the sea, were at least nine towns that can be located. It was not a wealthy region, although the inhabitants were energetic; and fishing was a dependable source of income for those who lived along the shores of the lake. There were home manufactures, but no industry in the modern sense of the word. It was an agricultural country; and it had one or two plains, one of which, the plain of Genesaret, on the shore of Lake Galilee, was very fertile. Apparently, also, the boundaries of Galilee extended far enough south to include at least the western end of the fertile plain of Esdraelon.

Herod Antipas was one of the sons of Herod the Great, and seems to have inherited something of his father's ambition to be a builder. Beyond that, however, he seems to have been a man of little vigor, and gradually came under the control of his wife, who is said to have been the wife

of one of his brothers, although it is a little difficult to understand this statement. He was one of a class of native rulers whose relation to the Roman Empire was not unlike that of the native princes of India to the British Empire. He was ruler within his own limits, and collected the taxes, from which he had to pay a considerable sum yearly to Rome. He apparently was allowed to maintain a small body of soldiers, for there are stories of centurions as in Matt. 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-9. He was, however, not permitted to accumulate any large amount of arms, and his final downfall resulted from the fact that he was discovered to be collecting military material. He had a private palace at Tiberias, the remains of which can still be seen, and another at Macchaerus on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. This was intended to serve as a center for maintaining order in Perea, which belonged to the territory under his administration.

A brother of Herod Antipas, Herod Philip, who was also under the control of Rome, had a little territory to the east of Galilee on the sides of Hermon, the chief city of which was one which Philip himself built and called Caesarea Philippi. This little city was situated by the side of a great cave at the foot of which one of the chief sources of the Jordan boiled out of the ground. This area had been for centuries a sacred place, and under Philip became an asylum for political offenders. Jesus was later to take advantage of this privilege.

The Romans directly administered Judea and Samaria from Caesarea, a port on the Mediterranean under a *propraetor*, Pilate. Herod had built a great city with a temple and other public buildings at Samaria, and Jerusalem had been enriched by Herod and his children with great public buildings, the most important of which were his own palace and the temple. But order was enforced by Roman soldiers.

We must not think of the political situation of this country, therefore, as akin to that of the United States. The people themselves had no part whatever in the selection of their rulers, all of whom were appointed by Rome. Nor did they have anything to say about legislation. In fact, there was no political body that could pass laws. The nearest approach to a legislature was the Sanhedrin; but its powers were limited to the private religious life of the Jews, and its members had no authority to punish offenders except those who were proved to be blasphemous against their religion.

Taxes were collected mostly by indirect methods; and tax-collecting had become a concession, as stated in a previous study. Both the Romans and the Herodians farmed out their taxes to various private persons, and these apparently were free to levy such imposts as the public could

endure. The so-called "publican" became thus an irritating symbol of the subjection of the people to foreign power. Constitutional government, as we know it, there was none. There was no constitution and no suffrage. Officers were appointed by the Romans, or in some cases by the native rulers; but in both cases they owed their authority not to the will of the governed but to the power of the Romans to maintain peace by the sword.

III. The Hope for a Divinely Established Jewish Empire

In the midst of these surroundings Jesus grew up. His home in Nazareth must have been a typical small town, doubtless with a limited amount of strictly local administration, but at the mercy of Herod and the Romans. Fortunately, we have enough material in Josephus to enable us to form a tolerably clear idea as to how the Galileans reacted to Antipas, and the people of Judea and Samaria to the Romans. It must be remembered that they were a disarmed people, although apparently individuals were permitted to carry swords. Superficially viewed, they seem to have been more prosperous than in the past. The cities were filled with Greeks as well as Jews, and a great variety of trades were carried on. But the people at large were poor and had no hope of becoming rich. It is true that some of the old families of Jerusalem, especially those of the Sadducees, who had the general control of the administration of the temple, were well-to-do; and there seems to have developed a group favorable to the Herodian family. But the people at large felt themselves oppressed as well as poor. They swarm across the pages of Josephus and of the gospels—crowds with no employment to assure them more than enough to live on the margin of starvation. There is no evidence that the cities were other than those of modern Palestine—their houses of one or two rooms, built of rough stone or more frequently of mud, similar to the adobe houses of the West.

Thanks to the information at our disposal, we can picture the psychology of the people from whom Jesus came. They not only felt the loss of political independence, but they felt themselves abused. The sight of the foreign officials and guards was a constant source of resentment; and this resentment was deepened by their recollection of the glories of the period which they discovered in their past, and by their subsequent hope of the future. Every now and then there were those who undertook to emulate the deeds of Mattathias and his family at the beginning of the Maccabean period. Read the account of Mattathias and his sons in

I and II Maccabees.¹ Especially in Galilee, according to Josephus, were the people always ready for revolt; and we have a number of accounts of men who undertook to rebel against the Roman control. These were put down relentlessly, sometimes by a native prince like Herod, sometimes by Roman forces. A reference to these events is found in Luke 13:2-3 and Acts 21:37-39. But, though unsuccessful, each revolt made men into heroes, and every bloody repression of an outbreak deepened the sense of national injustice and developed the psychology of revolution.

IV. Jesus Rejects Revolution and Relies upon God's Love

Jesus himself lived in a hotbed of this nationalism. The unrestrained brutality of rulers which appears in the following parable was the only type of government he knew. Read Luke 19:11-27; Matt. 17:25-26; 18:21-35; 22:1-10. His public ministry was only a generation before the outbreak of 66 A.D., when the entire country rose against the Romans. It would be impossible to think of him as indifferent to the spirit of the times. The Messianic hope was a phase of the revolutionary psychology. Jesus must have been acquainted with the stories of the Galilean and Judean revolutionists, or "bandits," as they were called, who undertook to maintain themselves in some mountain fastness. There was also, throughout at least sections of his people, the expectation of a deliverance to be wrought by God from foreign control. An empire of Jews would conquer and replace the empire of Rome. There circulated, at least among certain sections of the people, a type of revolutionary literature written in a sort of code which is known as "the apocalypses." This literature was to play a very considerable rôle in the development of Christianity and must be discussed to some extent in a later study. At present it is enough to remember that it was a secret-code literature of revolution. Its authors looked forward to a day when God, either by miracle or by the force of military leadership, would crush the Romans. The apocalypses breathed no spirit of love, but of bitter retaliation. Their hopes marked no advance over the political ideas of the time, but inspired people with a belief that the deliverance which God would make would be even more brutal than the treatment accorded the Jews by the Romans.

¹ The books of the Maccabees can be found in any Bible which contains the Apocrypha, a name given to a group of Jewish and Christian writings which have been finally excluded from the Bible itself, although at one time or another they have been treated as Canonical. They form a special section in many of the older editions of the Bible.

Poetry also set forth this hope. The expectation of a Messiah current in certain Jewish circles in the time of Jesus is found in a Jewish hymn written perhaps fifty years before the birth of John and of Jesus. We give the latter portion of this psalm in the English translation of Ryle and James:¹

Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their King, the son of David, in the time which thou, O God, knowest, that he may reign over Israel, thy servant; And gird him with strength, that he may break in pieces them that rule unjustly. Purge Jerusalem from the heathen that trample her down to destroy her, with wisdom and with righteousness.

He shall thrust out the sinners from the inheritance, utterly destroy the proud spirit of the sinners, and as potters' vessels with a rod of iron shall he break in pieces all their substance.

He shall destroy the ungodly nations with the word of his mouth, so that at his rebuke the nations may flee before him, and he shall convict the sinners in the thoughts of their hearts.

And he shall gather together a holy people whom he shall lead in righteousness; and shall judge the tribes of the people that hath been sanctified by the Lord his God.

And he shall not suffer iniquity to lodge in their midst; and none that knoweth wickedness shall dwell with them.

For he shall take knowledge of them, that they be all the sons of their God, and shall divide them upon the earth according to their tribes.

And the sojourner and the stranger shall dwell with them no more.

He shall judge the nations and the peoples with the wisdom of his righteousness. Selah.

And he shall possess the nations of the heathen to serve him beneath his yoke; and he shall glorify the Lord in a place to be seen of the whole earth.

And he shall purge Jerusalem and make it holy, even as it was in the days of old. So that the nations may come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, bringing as gifts her sons that had fainted,

And may see the glory of the Lord, wherewith God hath glorified her.

And a righteous King and taught of God is he that reigneth over them.

And there shall be no iniquity in his days in their midst, for all shall be holy and their King is the Lord Messiah.

For he shall not put his trust in horse and rider and bow, nor shall he multiply unto himself gold and silver for war, nor by ships shall he gather confidence for the day of battle.

The Lord himself is his King, and the hope of him that is strong in the hope of God.

And he shall have mercy upon all the nations that come before him in fear.

For he shall smite the earth with the word of his mouth even for evermore.

He shall bless the people of the Lord with wisdom and gladness.

¹ *Psalms of Solomon*, Ps. XVII, pp. 137-147.

He himself also is pure from sin, so that he may rule a mighty people, and rebuke princes and overthrow sinners by the might of his word.

And he shall not faint all his days, because he leaneth upon his God; for God shall cause him to be mighty through the spirit of holiness and wise through the counsel of understanding with might and righteousness.

And the blessing of the Lord is with him in might, and his hope in the Lord shall not faint.

And who can stand up against him? he is mighty in his works and strong in the fear of God,

Tending the flock of the Lord with faith and righteousness, and he shall suffer none among them to faint in their pasture.

In holiness shall he lead them all, and there shall no pride be among them, that any should be oppressed.

This is the majesty of the King of Israel, which God hath appointed to raise him up over the house of Israel, to instruct him.

His words shall be purified above fine gold, yea, above the choicest gold.

In the congregations will he judge among the peoples, the tribes of them that have been sanctified.

His words shall be as the words of the holy ones in the midst of the peoples that have been sanctified.

Blessed are they that shall be born in those days to behold the blessing of Israel which God shall bring to pass in the gathering of the tribes.

May God hasten his mercy toward Israel! may he deliver us from the abomination of unhallowed adversaries!

The Lord, he is our King from henceforth and even for evermore.

Living, as he did, in this atmosphere, Jesus must have continually found himself confronted with the question as to just what his attitude to the political power should be. Indeed, one of the temptations which came to him after he felt that God had called him to the messianic work was precisely this—whether he himself should adopt the revolutionary spirit and lead a revolt which might establish a new and divinely empowered political state, or whether his attitude should be that of passivity in politics and an emphasis upon his own conception of what the program of God for his people really was. Read again, with this idea in mind, the story of the temptation in Matt. 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13.

Nor was he without patriotism. He yearned over Jerusalem; he warned it against its revolutionary ambitions and foretold the tragic outcome which was to follow their reliance upon the same sort of coercive measures as those used by the Roman. Read Luke 19:29-44; Matt. 21:28-22:14; 23:37-39. He actually wept as he thought how his nation would make its trust in God a motive for revolution. He had been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matt. 15:21-28. But notice, both in this reference and in Mark 7:31-37, how he served others, not

Jews, who were wandering as if they had no shepherd, Mark 6:34, but how he refused to let this sense of popular need be diverted to other than religious duties. He knew the Spirit of God was with him because he had been empowered to minister to the needs of others. Read Luke 4:14-19; Matt. 12:15-21.

It was this decision, which must have been constantly in his mind, that led him to new appreciation of God and reliance upon him as a father rather than as divine conqueror. He warned his followers against revolt. They were not to oppose the officers of the law, Luke 12:58-59; they were not to rely upon violence, Matt. 5:38-42; Luke 6:27-38. His directions as to turning the cheek have a political as well as an individual bearing. When once the clever men of Jerusalem attempted to catch him in some revolutionary expression, the conversation made a well-known story. They asked him whether it was lawful to pay tribute to the Romans. He asked for a coin, asked them whose image and name were on it, and when they replied "Caesar's," said, "Give Caesar what belongs to him and give God what belongs to him," Mark 12:13-17. Such an answer does not imply that Jesus had any political philosophy. He would not counsel revolt, but rather submission to existing political conditions. Compare John 10:10, 11. Every time he put himself against the fermenting nationalism of his people, it was because of trust in the goodness of God. It must have been a severe test of his faith. We have left one dramatic story in John 6:1-15, when, as he was actually about to be coerced into heading a revolt, he fled from the crowds and retired into the privacy of prayer in the mountains.

Such an attitude was not that of fear. When they told Jesus that Herod would kill him unless he quit Galilee, he proudly challenged his counselors with his own conviction that he had a duty set him by the Father which he could not neglect. And when, even before this, John had been arrested and executed, he dared take up the work which his predecessor had left, fully aware that he and his followers would be liable to the fate that revolutionists in Galilee and Judea already had suffered. Read Matt. 4:12; Mark 1:14; Matt. 9:18-23. When the ecclesiastical authorities planned to arrest him, doubtless on the same charge they had subsequently made, he retired from Galilee into the non-Jewish region of Tyre and Sidon, Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-31, and then found temporary asylum in Caesarea Philippi. See Matt. 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30. It is significant that it was at that particular moment he asked his disciples as to their conception of him and his mission, and repudiated Peter's suggestion that he might avoid the death he foretold by following the popular ideas of the divine deliverer. It obviously was not easy for

him to make such a decision. The suggestion he said was something over which he could stumble. Read Matt. 16:20-28. In the last days of his life, when self-defense seemed imperative, he did indeed tell his followers to get swords, Luke 22:35-38, but he immediately said that two were enough, and when one of them was used in the darkness of the garden he rebuked his zealous follower. They that drew the sword would perish by the sword, Luke 22:47-51; Matt. 26:47-56.

V. The Resulting Experience of God

The more we study Jesus as he faced the political unrest and the revolutionary ferment, the more convinced we become that his decisions not to lead an armed revolt and to keep himself clear from anything like political propaganda were due to a determination to be consistent with his own deepest conviction that God was love and that love rather than violence was to be the true method of the individual and the nation. He knew he would be an incentive to violence, Matt. 10:34-39; Luke 12:49-53. No man who looked out upon society as realistically as did Jesus could choose to avoid yielding to popular expectation without inner struggle. Note Mark 12:35-39. And this struggle it was that led him increasingly to rely upon the heavenly Father. The reign of God was not to be inaugurated by a military leader. For that reason he never avoided publicity as the Messiah, Luke 19:29-40. His followers were to find prosperity not by way of revolution but by way of sacrifice for others, in complete trust in the goodness of a heavenly Father. See Matt. 5:44-48. He himself set the example. When once he saw the inevitable in his relations with his people, he recognized it as the will of the Father, and, despite bitter disappointment, rejoiced in spirit that he had discovered what was good in the sight of the heavenly Father, even though the wise and prudent turned from him and only the babes followed him, as expressed in Matt. 11:25-30, and Luke 10:21-24. Anyone who has undertaken to induce a community of people to realize the power of trust in justice and God rather than political violence can understand how, as failure followed failure, and his true followers failed to understand him, Luke 18:31-34, Jesus must have been led to an ever-deepening dependence upon the Father. Only that could keep him serene in spirit and save him from cynicism or some desperate appeal to national pride and religious hopes that might have made him one of the world's great leaders in war and politics, but which would have been contrary to his own deepest convictions as to the way of human progress and genuine freedom. He relied upon God. The more intense the strain between

popular ideals and his own conception, the more intense his faith became. His experience of God saved him from a program of revolution. What we call the "triumphal entry," Matt. 21:1-11, was really a dramatic exposition to his people that the real deliverance could come not by armies but by peace and fraternity. He was still the prophet from Nazareth. With revolution threatening in the movement he had started, he endeavored to make his followers believe in the God who was a father rather than a conqueror. He himself dramatized his faith when he died upon the cross falsely accused of being a revolutionist, the king of the Jews. Read Matt. 27:33-44. He chose loyalty to his belief in the father's love rather than appeal to revolt. His followers were not to fight but to follow Truth, John 18:33-38. He died, commending himself to a Father, Luke 23:46.

VI. Such an Experience an Incentive to Us

It is difficult for us to emulate Jesus in this attitude. We lack his all-absorbing conviction that love is at the heart of things and that human progress ultimately rests not upon the victory of armies but upon the establishment of justice in every area of life, and a self-sacrificing conviction that permanent progress does not come from military triumph. We live in a world that, so far from making toward any political unity like the Roman Empire, seems to be increasingly disintegrating into competitive nations armed to the teeth. We are far enough from living in a world where men believe that it is better to give justice than to get justice. Sometimes war itself seems the lesser of two evils. But whoever would experience God as Jesus experienced him must be dominated by the conviction that all attempts at coercion are less effective than policies and programs in which nations as well as individuals treat others as they themselves like to be treated. The peacemaker just now is more in evidence than ever before, but the machinery and propaganda of force are also increasingly in evidence. Life does not readily reduce itself to any formula, and opportunities for generosity and the giving of justice seem sometimes to be lacking. But to believe that such conditions are final is to part company with Jesus. It is to prefer the Lord of hosts to the Father in Heaven. As one seeks to re-express the spirit of Jesus, the more does he need the faith of Jesus that the ultimate law of God in human affairs is not the law of the jungle but the law of the home. And whoever undertakes to embody such principles will find, even though he has to go across some Calvary, that Jesus' experience of God will be his also.

The deeper the tension, the more acute the issue, the more we find serenity of soul and courage of conviction reinforced by the spirit of the God who is Love.

VII. Politics as a Way to an Experience of God

There are only two alternatives to such heroic faith. We may think it too idealistic for the politics in a world like ours and, as we say, "Fight fire with fire." So many an earnest worker for human welfare has chosen. The triumph of a God of Love seems sadly postponed. And in truth, men learn the reasonableness of giving justice with more difficulty than the madness of forcing men to yield to force. But God is not on the side of the strongest battalions, but on that of the democratization of privilege and the recognition of other nations' rights. Whoever believes this may sometimes feel that individual and national criminals must be restrained by force, but such concession to impending circumstances is not a reliance upon force as the ultimate basis of permanent progress. It may be akin to the advice of Jesus "to make friends through the Mammon of unrighteousness." And when such tragic moments come, we must not abandon our trust in love as the final channel of God's working. Hatreds may unify and nerve men for war, but war is at best an evil. Evil men must be restrained; but reform, equitable laws, social justice, and the socializing of the attitude of Jesus will make such restraint less demanded. Our very experience of evils, if we are genuinely committed to the Golden Rule, will make us rely more upon God. We know him better as we, like Jesus, love our enemies. We get serenity of soul and courage as we feel we are at one with him, the cosmic will of love.

The only alternative is that of surrender to some futilitarian philosophy of life. The cost of serving our fellows is great, and success seems often to elude us. It seems easier to abandon high purposes, adopt questionable methods in politics, or altogether quit efforts at reform. This is the current temptation to men who have reached some measure of responsibility and success. They fear the cost of political reform. They do more than submit to political evils: they pay tribute to criminals and grafting officials rather than openly support reform. They declare municipal and national affairs to be none of their concern.

No wonder that such men distrust the power of love, and fail of a complete experience of God. Cynicism and cowardice are not roads to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Sometimes it seems as if it is harder to find God in the complications of our world than in the abandonment either of the search for him or of

life in a social order. Millions have chosen the latter course, but there is no spiritual triumph in retreat. We must find God in our social life. We cannot, with Jesus, abandon family, economic, or political life. Participation in political life is no longer, in America, at least, identical with revolutionary violence. We must live in our world, and improve our world; but we can refuse, like Jesus, to rely upon coercion. We can put our scientific knowledge and our democracy at the service of our desire to help others; and as we thus, in our own political circumstances, in our own civic duties, and our own national policies, reproduce his attitude and faith, we shall not only find new need of God but, in seeking him, we shall find him. For he is always near those who trust the power of justice and fraternity—in politics as truly as in all relations as individuals.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Compare the development of the western Mediterranean region with that of the eastern.
2. What constructively did Roman rule do for Palestine?
3. What was the basic principle of Roman control?
4. What were the agencies through which Rome carried out her policies?
5. Why did the Jews alone object to this compulsory peace enforcement?
6. Why was Jesus not a subject of Rome?
7. Who was Herod Antipas?
8. In what way was the government of Judea and Samaria different from that of Galilee?
9. How did the Jews expect to achieve the independence to which they aspired?
10. What had been the fate of those who had led revolts in the past?
11. By what means would Jesus normally imbibe the revolutionary spirit?
12. Describe his attitude toward his country, and the principles by which he believed its conditions might be changed.
13. Through what struggles did he arrive at this conclusion?
14. Was Jesus a true patriot?
15. Was his failure to attempt to organize a revolution due to any lack of courage? Illustrate.
16. Was Jesus disloyal to the Romans or was his policy in greater harmony with theirs than that of his people?
17. How did his confidence in God's way lead to greater appreciation of God?
18. In what way did his experience of God mold his idea of the Messianic mission?
19. Does hatred ever work constructively for good?
20. What is the usual attitude of the ordinary citizen toward political problems?
21. Was Jesus adverse to political activity, or was his inactivity due to the conditions of his time?
22. How would the spirit of Jesus injected into politicians of today work?
23. Might modern politicians imbued with the spirit of Jesus get a real experience of God from their political activities? If so, of what character might that experience be?

Study V

Jesus' Experience of God through the Social Conditions of His People

By ERNEST F. SCOTT

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—By this time the students of this course will have discovered that the monthly instalments are not meant for casual reading, but that their study cannot be carried on without constant reference to the text of the Gospels. The reading of brief passages, however, must have kindled a desire for a more comprehensive reading of the Gospel records. With this chapter, therefore, a smaller number of references are given in order that, thrown upon his own resources, the student may read consecutively for general impression as well as for specific detail. For this reason questions which will serve as stimuli are interspersed. These are not to be confused with the review questions at the end of the chapter which will be answered by those desiring a certificate. Read frequently and extensively with the spirit of discovery in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.]

Religion is bound up, to a far greater extent than is commonly suspected, with the social arrangements of each particular age. No doubt it has much to do with the molding of institutions, but in at least equal measure it is molded by them. Oriental peoples have usually conceived of God as an absolute monarch—the divine counterpart of the autocrat who is over them on earth. The Greeks worshiped a group of divinities, allied with one another by birth and marriage—a heavenly aristocracy like those which held rule in the early Greek cities. The Roman gods were little more than neutral officials, on whom, as on the consuls and praetors, was laid the duty of maintaining the stated laws. Similar analogies may be traced in our own religion. It has been said, with a considerable degree of truth, that if all records of European history were lost it would still be possible to trace out the main course of the political development from a study of Christian theology. The various conceptions of the nature of God and of his relation to the world have reflected faithfully the changing institutions which have followed each other during the past centuries. Everyone would recognize that the spread of democratic ideas in our own time is giving rise to a new type of

Christian thought. We are beginning to conceive of God no longer as a monarch imposing his fixed decrees but as in some manner co-operating with men. We are laying stress on the call to human brotherhood involved in the gospel, much more than on the old theological dogmas. It seems at first impossible that our beliefs on purely spiritual matters should be influenced by the political movements of the day, and most of us would be ready to declare that we keep the two interests entirely separate. Yet in a hundred subtle ways which cannot be defined the social and the inner religious life are always reacting on each other.

I. Social Interpretations of the Work of Jesus

There is a real question, therefore, as to whether Jesus himself may not have been affected, not merely in the outward form of his teaching but in his inner religious thought, by the institutions under which he lived. Some modern writers have tried to explain him entirely in the light of historical conditions. They have sought to make out that his work was not so much religious in its nature as social or political. It is argued, for instance, that his aim was to set on foot a revolt of the poorer classes against the injustice to which they were subjected. He was himself a man of the people—the eldest son of a large family that had to suffer all manner of privations and toil incessantly for a bare subsistence. Indignant at the social wrongs which he and his dear ones had endured, he felt, as many toilers have felt since, that the religion which lent its sanction to these inequalities was no better than a mockery. He set himself so to transform religion that it should become the instrument of social righteousness. His gospel, at the heart of it, was a message for the oppressed, a summons to the world, in the name of God, to acknowledge the claims of the poor. Others have maintained that the key to all his teaching is to be sought in the political situation of his time. Palestine had been incorporated in the Roman Empire and this foreign tyranny was fiercely resented—so much so that a generation after his death the smouldering discontent blazed out in the memorable revolt which brought an end to the Jewish nation. Jesus, it is contended, shared in the national feeling, which was especially strong in his native province of Galilee. According to one view he sought by his message of the Kingdom of God to fan the patriotic aspirations. According to another view, while he yearned for his people's deliverance he saw the futility of violent action such as was advocated by the Zealots. He taught that the national aims could best be secured by patient waiting on God, who was preparing even now to come to the rescue of Israel.

II. Inadequacy of Such Theories

All these explanations rest on mere conjecture, and appear to break down when we look more closely at the facts. There is no evidence whatever that it was any part of Jesus' design to commence a proletarian movement. No doubt he was in profound sympathy with the poor, as generous souls have always been, whatever their rank in life or their political opinions. But he never intended to make himself the champion of some particular class to which he happened himself to belong. For that part, the ordinary ideas as to his social status are probably mistaken. He was indeed born in a carpenter's family, but handicrafts were held in high honor by the Jews of his time. The carpenter of Nazareth was more than likely a man of good position, with workmen under him. Jesus, it is plain, had been well educated, according to the standards of the day, and no one respected him less because he worked with his hands, as Paul, the honored citizen of Rome and Tarsus, was to do after him. It seems always to be understood in the Gospels that he had made a worldly sacrifice in giving up his prospects at Nazareth and coming forward as a homeless Teacher. In any case, he never took account of class and rank. He loved the poor and outcast, but his highest eulogy was passed on a wealthy Gentile officer. His most devoted followers were women of social position. He fraternized with rich Pharisees as well as with publicans and sinners. The one criterion which he applied to all who sought his company was that of the open, receptive heart.

As his message had nothing to do with questions of class, neither was it in any sense political. His one anxiety, indeed, was to avoid political complications. He knew that the situation was dangerous, and that a false step might cost him his life. He knew, too, that many were looking out for a national leader and that if he cared to declare himself in this character he would at once have a large following. Note John 6:15. But his heart was set on his religious mission and he would allow nothing to distract him from it or confuse it in the minds of the people with any political aim. When the effort was made to snare him into taking sides on the burning question of the day he answered "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). Political loyalty was one thing, and religion quite another. Moreover it needs to be emphasized that the Roman government was not a tyranny, against which a right-minded man was called on to protest. The administration of Palestine in the time of Jesus was probably better than it ever was before or since. Laws were strictly enforced, self-seeking factions were held in check, opportunities were given for all honest men to

make a livelihood and lay up for the future. All other nations of the time were glad to enjoy the security from outward peril and the establishment of law and order which Rome had brought to them, and the mass of the people in Palestine had probably the same feeling. The rebellion of the later years was worked up by agitators, men for the most part of doubtful character and motives, with whom Jesus can have had little sympathy. To regard him as in any sense a politician is nothing less than absurd.

Find and list passages in the Gospels which illustrate the attitude of Jesus on (a) political, (b) economic questions. Does your investigation lead you to agree with the author concerning the absurdity of regarding Jesus as in any sense a politician? What incidents indicate his breaking-away from Jewish Nationalism? How about his attitude toward the Samaritans? Note other contacts with Gentiles.

III. Jesus Experiencing God in Facing Social Cleavages

In what way, then, may we think of Jesus as affected, in his religious thought and experience, by the social conditions of his age? It has always to be remembered that of the whole earlier period of his life we are told nothing. He first comes before us at his baptism with his mind matured, with his attitude to God confirmed by thirty years of thought and activity. It is only by inference from his deeds and sayings and parables that we can gather what had been happening to him during those formative years. But though we cannot trace out his social experience in detail we can tell something as to its general nature.

It seems evident, in the first place, that he had been revolted by the artificial distinctions which had been established by the religion of the Law. In the Judaism of the time there was little of the class feeling which embitters our social relations now. All good Jews, whatever their wealth or ancestry, were expected to look on each other as brethren. It was expressly laid down that no one should be debarred by his lack of worldly standing from admission into the honored sect of the Pharisees. Some of the most venerated Rabbis lived in deep poverty. But while the Law abolished many inequalities it created others, which were far more grievous. Read John 7:49 and note how the strict followers of the Law despised the "people of the land"—the ordinary men and women who were unable to carry out all the requirements. Full Jews held aloof from the half-Gentile Samaritans. Men of particular callings, especially the tax-gatherers, were compelled to have daily contact with forbidden persons and objects and were therefore regarded as unclean. Most miserable of all were those afflicted with certain diseases, such as leprosy. The Law had declared that all who came near them were religiously contaminated,

and they were thrust outside the pale. In consequence of all these restrictions men were divided much as they are still under the caste system of India. It was in the face of such division that Jesus formed his idea of God. He found men despising and avoiding their fellow-men, and honestly believing that this was their religious duty. They thought of God as of one who for arbitrary reasons had separated men and who was angry with those who even in ignorance or for motives of humanity broke through the barriers. Jesus could not believe that such was the character of God. As he mingled with that Jewish society in which men were so carefully marked off from one another, the thought grew up in him of a God who loved all men alike, who took more account of justice and mercy than of ritual requirements. We are here in no region of mere conjecture. The Gospels are full of the protests which Jesus made against the separations brought about by the legal system of his day. It is evident that he had long been brooding over the impiety which insisted, in the name of God, on those unjust and inhuman conditions. All through his ministry we find him taking every opportunity to show kindness to those whom the Law had made outcasts, so that a name thus classifying him was given him by way of reproach. Read Matt. 11:19. We can hardly doubt that his great conception of God as Father was largely due to the revulsion created in his mind by the prevailing system. In his search after God he had come to feel that no conception of him could be true which did not recognize that all men alike are his children.

Read the Gospels and list incidents of Jesus' sympathy with the poor. This exploration will emphasize the results of Study 3, which it would be well to review here. List also people of wealth who were attracted to him and state why. What social attitudes does he criticize?

IV. Jesus' Experience of God Rising Out of Conflict with Current Legalism

In another way we can see how the social conditions resulting from the Law must have influenced Jesus in his effort to arrive at a true conception of God. It is very significant that in his judgments on evildoers he is much harder on some sins than on others. While he does not fail to condemn lust and violence he is louder in his condemnation of certain offenses which, to our minds, might appear far less serious. He denounces callousness in all its forms—not only open cruelty but the coldness of sympathy which merely refrains from helping the weak. This is the meaning of Matt. 18:6 and Luke 7:23. Above all, he thinks of pride, with its kindred vice of hypocrisy, as the worst of sins. There is hope for

the man who knows that his life is evil and that he needs God's mercy and forgiveness. But what can be made of the self-righteous man, so fully satisfied with his attainments that he looks down on all other men? It is vain to speak to such a man about the higher life, since he is convinced that he has reached it already. He cannot be made to understand his need of God. We can hardly doubt that Jesus dwells so much on this type of sin because he saw that the men of his time were more liable to it than to any other. The Law had done much for Israel; owing to its teaching the Jews were humane, moral, conscientious above all peoples of the ancient world. But Jewish society, based on the Law, was hard and self-complacent and narrow-minded. It had much in common with that puritanical society which grew up in England and America about the middle of the last century, and which drew on it the wrath of writers like Dickens and Ruskin.

We can well understand how Jesus, moving about in that cold though highly religious society of his day, was conscious that under all the outward show there was a deep-seated "hypocrisy." Those people, so intent on the mint and anise and cummin, had no sense whatever for the weightier matters of the law. Read Matt. 23:23. With all their devotion to conventional worship they had never known God. They were wrapt up in themselves and had their hearts closed against all higher influences. It was by way of protest against the prevailing temper that Jesus formed his own conception of man's true relation to God. If he had lived in another kind of society, for instance that which he would have found in Rome or Antioch, he would have attacked other vices, and perhaps would have exalted other virtues. Living in Palestine, where the Pharisee was the type of religious excellence, he denounced pride and hypocrisy. He declared that in meekness, humility, forgetfulness of self, men would offer the true service to God.

Search the Gospels and list examples of conduct which Jesus commends and note the different classes of persons included in his commendation.

V. Jesus' Experience of God in Consciousness of World-Empire

It was largely through revolt against existing conditions that Jesus attained to higher knowledge. How far was he positively helped by them? This question is not so easy to answer, but it would be unjust to say that his attitude to society as he found it was entirely one of condemnation. There was not a little in the conditions of the time which had value for him in his spiritual life. For one thing, it meant much to him

that although he was born a Jew in a small obscure province he was yet a member of the world-wide community which had been welded together by the Roman power. It was the fact of the empire which in after days secured the universal spread of his message. Palestine, as part of the imperial system, had connections with all the other countries, and from Jerusalem as a center the Christian mission extended itself by a natural process over the known world. If Jesus had appeared a generation or two earlier, when Palestine was a little kingdom by itself, this missionary activity would have been impossible. But we cannot doubt that his membership in the empire had a profound though perhaps unconscious influence on Jesus himself. Too much has usually been made of the possible effect on him of the Jewish revolutionary movement. It is well to remember that however they felt about it the Jews had their place in the great organization which Rome had created. They were no longer confined to their own parochial interests but could feel that they were part and parcel of a vast community. They were affected, in spite of themselves, by the tides of general thought and feeling; everything that concerned humanity as a whole was of some concern to them. So we are not to think of Jesus as a mere provincial, ignorant of everything that lay outside of his own native district. This idea of him has been far too common, and has often hindered a due appreciation of the real scope of his work. People forget when they call him a Galilaean that he also belonged to a mighty empire. This, indeed, must have been constantly borne in on him from his very childhood. Nazareth lay close to the highroad between the coast and Damascus, and the procession of merchants and soldiers, travelers of all types and nationalities was passing constantly before his eyes.

In the course of his ministry we find him meeting, as a matter of course, with all sorts of people. Since the Roman occupation Palestine had become cosmopolitan. There were large settlements, the most important of them in Galilee itself, where the language and culture were entirely Greek. Commerce was actively carried on with Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor. Roman officials were everywhere in evidence. The Jews themselves had taken advantage of their union with the empire to scatter widely, and there was probably not a family but had representatives in some foreign land. At Passover season these exiles would return, some of them from the very ends of the earth, and bring tidings of distant men and places. Nothing could be farther from the truth than the picture which is sometimes drawn of Jesus as a rustic prophet, ignorant of any conditions outside of his own sequestered district and hardly conscious that there was a world outside. He had opportunities for watching the

whole panorama of human life, and as we know from his parables he was wonderfully observant. When he said on one occasion "many will come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south" (Luke 13:29) he was not using a vague form of words. He had before his mind's eye all the diversities of the human race as he had marked them for himself. It is not difficult to see how this consciousness of a wider world must have affected his religious thinking.

As we turn from the earlier Jewish literature to the Gospels we feel at once that there is a new breadth of outlook. Even the wisest of the previous teachers are limited in their interests to the Jewish nation. They take for granted that the Kingdom of God will include only Israel. When they speak of the needs of mankind we are aware, at every point, that they are thinking merely of the needs of their fellow-countrymen. Out of Judaism in its earlier form it would have been impossible to make a religion for the world. Jesus lived in Palestine, and addressed his message to its people. So far as we know he never crossed its borders except on that one occasion when he sojourned for a brief period in the neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon, Matt. 15:21. But while he lived and died as a Palestinian Jew he was connected with the vast empire. We read in the story of the Temptation that a vision was given him of all the kingdoms of the earth; and it may be said that in a real sense this vision was always present to him and unconsciously governed his thought. He had the conception of humanity as a whole. His mind was in harmony with the great general movement. Thus there entered into his teaching a universality which the world was quick to recognize.

It has sometimes been argued that Christianity was changed from a local to a universal religion by some kind of accident. Jesus had meant it only for Jews, but Paul and others took it out to the Gentile world and explained it in new language so that Gentiles could understand it. Undoubtedly Paul did a wonderful service. It was owing to him more than to any other that Christianity within a single generation spread out from Palestine into all the earth. But it could not thus have spread unless it had been inherently a universal message. Jesus himself had taught in terms of all humanity; and this was due, at least in part, to his association with a great empire. And to this we may also in some measure attribute his new conception of God. No teacher before him had been able to escape from the old idea that God, while he was Creator of the world and Ruler of all nations, was peculiarly the God of Israel. It is taken for granted even by the greatest prophets that God's chief concern is for his chosen people, and all his action is related somehow to the destiny he has in store for them. This, more than anything else, narrows

the old conception of God. There could be no idea of a Father whose love embraces all men equally while he was regarded as a national God, working always for the good of one particular people. Jesus was able to see the whole world as one, and he thought of God in relation to the world. He thus conceived of the love of God as comprehensive and unreserved and directed to all men simply as men. No doubt this insight into the love of God came to him ultimately out of his own inward fellowship with God; yet it was clarified for him by that larger sense of humanity which was made possible by the conditions under which he lived. In the thinking of all of us the influences from within are strangely blended with those from without. We never can say whether a higher thought or impulse has sprung entirely out of our own hearts or has been partly suggested by circumstance. It was the same, doubtless, with the experience of Jesus.

Review here all that has been said in previous studies about the Roman Empire. Study the location of Palestine in relation to the West and to the East. What were the conditions of travel? What travelers would be likely to come to Palestine? Review the Gospels in search of specific evidence of the world-interest of Jesus.

VI. Jesus Experiencing God in the Complexities of Oriental Society

In another and very different way Jesus was helped in his religious thinking by the conditions imposed on him by his time and country. All who belonged to that ancient Oriental society were thrown very close together. To an extent which in our western civilization we can hardly imagine, and which we could not be brought to tolerate, life had to be lived in public. Perhaps the chief advantage that our material progress has conferred on us is nothing else than this—that we now enjoy a privacy which in old times was never dreamed of, and which is still lacking in many parts of the world. There is a general understanding that people must not encroach on their neighbors. Room is provided for us, as far as possible, to follow out our own tastes and live our own lives. The sick are allowed to suffer in seclusion; the feeble-minded are segregated; we choose our own society; we come home from the day's work and close the door behind us, with a fair assurance that now we shall be left alone.

In Jesus' land and time it was all different. Parents and their married children would share the same house. Houses were small and were crowded together in narrow streets. The waking hours were mostly spent out

of doors in some public place, where people worked together in groups or passed the evening in conversation. A vivid picture is offered us in the Gospels of how life went on under those conditions. We learn that when meals were going on in private houses all passers-by were free to enter as they pleased, and watch and listen. Picture the dinner alluded to in Luke 7:36-50. The sick were carried in their beds from place to place. Insane persons were left unconfined, and some of them were present in every crowd. People were all acquainted with each other's lives and business, and had no regard to anyone's desire for quiet. We see Jesus moving in this miscellaneous society, always pursued by crowds, no leisure allowed him even to eat, pining for a little solitude, and never finding it except now and then on a mountain-top at midnight. It has come as a shock to many travelers when visiting an eastern town to reflect that this was the environment in which Jesus lived. How could he endure it? How was he able, in the midst of that seething, squalid humanity, to think deep thoughts and maintain his fellowship with God?

But we are apt to forget that the modern effort to secure room for the individual has not resulted wholly to our advantage. It has been made easy for us to exclude ourselves from all contact with the mass of our fellow-men, from all knowledge of things it would be unpleasant to know. Most of us would be surprised if we could only realize in how narrow a world we are living. Apart from a few friends whose opinions and interests are the same as our own we are ignorant of mankind. The people whom we pass on the street are so many strange faces to us. They are going their round as we go ours, and the one anxiety on both sides is to keep apart as far as possible from one another. Under the conditions of Jesus' time this isolated type of life which is now coming to be the normal one was not possible. However selfish men might be they were compelled at least to know of other men's existence. The sick and poverty-stricken and infirm in mind were constantly before their eyes, and they could not take refuge in a fool's paradise. They were kept close, in all their daily intercourse, to the realities of human life. It was in such a society that Jesus had always lived, and from this we may best explain a great deal in the nature of his teaching. He grew up with a full knowledge of his fellow-men. His sympathy went out to the poor and suffering in no mere sentimental fashion but because he associated with them and was able to put himself in their place. For this reason, too, his message was one which has appealed to all types and classes of men.

One of the chief weaknesses of our modern religion is that it is so sectional. There are some preachers and writers who gather their audience

from the well-to-do, others from the highly educated, others from the poor and ignorant. Their own experience has limited them to the one class. They know the difficulties encountered by college men and women, or by those who have to struggle for their daily bread; but the message that powerfully moves the one kind of audience is meaningless or even ridiculous to the other. So the one gospel is coming to divide itself into a number of gospels, each of them intended only for one given set of hearers. Jesus, even if he had wished to, could not have taught a merely sectional message. He had learned his knowledge of men from a study of all varieties, and they were all represented in every audience to which he spoke. His teaching was for all men, and all men, whatever their circumstances may be, can still understand it and feel that it meets their needs. And it was in the light of this broad experience of men that he thought of God.

It has often been objected to many of our hymns and to beautiful works of devotion like the *Imitation of Christ*, that they were composed by monks who knew hardly anything of men outside of their little brotherhood. How could such men form a just conception of God the Father of all? It is more than probable that our religion has been narrowed and distorted because it has so come to us. Men learn to know God whom they have not seen by knowledge of their brother whom they have seen. Note I John 4:20. And the more they have seen of their brethren the more they will rise to a full and many-sided knowledge of God. The recluses to whom we owe so much of our traditional religion were able to know God only in particular aspects of his nature. Jesus, from his childhood onward, had been mingling freely with all kinds of men. Much has been written, often very beautifully, of his solitary musings on the hills around Nazareth, and this was no doubt a real part of his experience. But he had also been one in the crowd that gathered in the market-place; he had traveled along with caravans; he had mixed every day of his life with good men and bad men, with the sick and the miserable and the young and old, in that intimate comradeship which was forced on him by the conditions of his age. It was from this, perhaps, as much as from his hours of lonely thought that he had learned to know God as the universal Father, who satisfies the needs of all and who cares when even a sparrow falls to the ground.

Read the Gospel of Luke and note the many occasions which picture Jesus surrounded by people and the few when he was alone.

*VII. Jesus' Experience of God in Sharing
the Common Lot*

Once more, it has always to be remembered that social life in the days of Jesus was much simpler than it is now. Large industries were unknown. There were no means of transport, and people commonly lived all their lives in the village where they were born. Life was a familiar routine, and an occasional marriage-feast, as we know from the Gospel was a great event. All that a household required it usually produced for itself, baking its bread from corn which it had sown and reaped and ground, fashioning its clothes from stuff of its own weaving. It has often been urged that Jesus' gospel, addressed to a society of this kind, can have little value to us now. When he tells us, for instance, to put our trust in God without thought for tomorrow we can see how this might have applied to those peasants of Galilee, but for us, in the endless complexity of our modern life, such counsel is futile and dangerous. Or when he speaks of God as Father he had in mind that ancient world when it was quite possible to conceive of a great being who knew everything that was passing on earth and concerned himself with the destinies of each individual soul. How can we so think of God in these days, when knowledge has so immeasurably widened and we have grown aware of the insignificance of this earth? Yet it was just the simplicity of the old conditions that made it possible for Jesus to see life clearly and truly. In the complexity of our modern world we have grown confused. We are so distracted by all the novelties and appendages of life that we lose sight of the permanent elements.

When all is said the great realities of human existence have never changed, in spite of progress and larger knowledge. Men are born and suffer and die and struggle with weakness and temptation. The effect of the new complexities is to disguise from us the essential facts; and in that society with which Jesus was familiar they stood out plainly as they were. Men were face to face with the natural joys and sorrows; they could feel that all things came to them as gifts from a divine hand: they knew that in time of trouble they had no help except in God. The message of Jesus loses nothing because it comes to us from that simpler age. On the contrary, it has a directness and sincerity which would otherwise have been lost. Jesus took hold of human life just as it was. He never missed his way among things that are merely accidental but was always close to the realities. It was due in no small measure to those conditions under which he lived that he was able to realize so clearly the relations between man and God. In that primitive society all the wrap-

pings were torn away. Life was before him in its bare elements. He could recognize man's need for God and the fatherly care with which God watches over man. Hence it is that his gospel is so enduring and universal. Religions have sprung up from time to time in far more cultured societies but have soon died out and have never appealed to more than a few. All races, in all the different stages of knowledge and refinement, have responded to the message of Jesus. He speaks, to the common nature, the fundamental experience of mankind, and all can understand him.

In all these ways we can trace out a real connection between the religion of Jesus and the social conditions into which he came.

It used to be assumed that the circumstances of his earthly life ought to be treated as quite indifferent. Since he had been sent by God with a message of eternal value he would have been what he was and taught precisely the same message in whatever time or country he might have happened to appear. Our worship must be directed to this Christ who is beyond space and time, and the less we connect him with his mere earthly surroundings the better we shall know him. Now it is no doubt true that we get only a little way into his secret by any historical study. There have been many attempts in recent years to explain him wholly from the time in which he lived, from the race and family he was born in, from the various influences that may have acted on him in his early youth. All this is futile. It is impossible to explain even the most ordinary man from a study of the mere external things. Everyone comes into the world with a personality of his own, and unless you know something of that you know nothing. In a supreme measure it is true of Jesus that when all outward factors have been ascertained (and we must not forget how little, at the most, we know of them) he was himself. It is the mystery of his own nature which we need to explain, and which will always lie beyond us. But the old idea that his religion has nothing to do with the facts of his earthly life was a radically false one. The power of his gospel has always consisted in this—that through him God manifested himself under the conditions of human life. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus did not stand apart from history but wove himself into it and was molded, as we all are, by the social forces of his time. The more we can discover what they were, and how he reacted to them, the better we shall understand his inward experience of God. And we shall be more able to see ourselves in the midst of our own times. We shall be led to judge whether, in our own reactions to the various life-situations which we meet, we are coming to a clearer appreciation of God even as Jesus did in meeting the life-situations which were his lot.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. On what grounds has it been held that Jesus' aim was political?
2. Was it ever proposed to make him a national leader?
3. Give three instances of Jesus' sympathy with the poor.
4. What do you infer to have been the chief occupations in Galilee in the time of Jesus?
5. Illustrate Jesus' interest in children.
6. Mention some glimpses into domestic life which we have in the gospels.
7. What can we infer as to wages, hours of work, and recreation?
8. What was Jesus' attitude toward the Gentiles?
9. Describe his attitude toward persons of wealth.
10. For what, chiefly, does he criticize the Pharisees?
11. Describe the life of the people of Galilee from the point of view of publicity.
12. Mention occasions on which Jesus wished for solitude, and his experience of God on these occasions.
13. How do you think that Jesus was influenced by his connection with a great empire?
14. What was his experience of God in his intercourse with the common people?
15. Do you think that there is opportunity for experience of God in the current international interests of the people of our own country? Why?
16. What opportunity is there for experience of God in sharing responsibility for relief in the present financial depression? What would Jesus have done?
17. What sins would Jesus be likely especially to attack in the life of today?
18. How might one expect to experience God in attacking these evils?
19. What other conditions can you note in the life of today which, if nobly met, might lead to experience of God?

Study VI

Jesus' Experience of God through the Religious Institutions of His People

BY DONALD W. RIDDLE

I. The Institutional Equipment of Jesus

To learn of Jesus' experience of God through the religious institutions of his time and place, one must begin by remembering that the religious equipment of his environment in this respect was very rich. Born into a Jewish family, he would grow in his childhood into a consciousness of the many ways in which religion regulated all the affairs of life. There were customs in the preparation of the family food, there were customary prayers, there were regular fasts and on certain happy occasions Jesus, with the other members of his family, was taken to the observance of the stated Jewish feasts. On the Sabbath day the special features of institutional equipment were all the more apparent. Not only was Jesus early made conscious of the synagogue and all its services, but the special food and company of that day made it a memorable one.

As he grew somewhat older, he was taught from that prized possession of every Jewish family, the law. He learned heroic stories from its narrative sections; he heard high ideals from its prophetic utterances. As was the case with all Jewish boys, at about the time he reached the age of twelve his responsibility to live according to all the requirements of the law was made apparent and he voluntarily undertook to meet, in his own life, the standard which all loyal Jews accepted. This would mean that he would be bound by the food laws, that he would have to separate himself from the non-Jewish elements of the world, that he would keep the Sabbath, and on the whole that he would realize in every aspect of his life the standard of the Jewish law.

When he became able to appreciate Jewish life in its wider range, he would be conscious of the Temple and what it stood for. Even before this he would have become conscious of that important day when of all days there was fasting in remembrance of the sins of his people and when, as every Jew knew, the High Priest, who was the head of the sacrificial

system in Israel, offered the prayers and sacrifices which were thought to atone for the sins of all the people. From time to time in his Galilean home he would meet those priests who had returned from the residence in Jerusalem which their duties required. Upon occasions it would seem that he himself was taken to Jerusalem and later went on his own initiative and there saw for himself the sacrificial equipment of his religion.

Much closer to him, of course, as a child and a young man was the synagogue, for in any Jewish community the presence of ten males, including immature children, sufficed to form the organization of a synagogue. There, at the required time for service, especially on the Sabbath, he would go with the other people of his town, and there hear the law and the lesson from the Prophets read, and listen to and participate in the prayers of the service. There he heard the exposition of the lesson, that sermon-like address which someone would be called upon to make. Doubtless Jesus, like many another Jewish boy, learned how to read from being taught at a synagogue school by some local scribe, and there the stories told in his home of Israel's heroes and great achievements were supplemented more widely by what he was taught from the Jewish scriptures.

Finally, as Jesus, or any Jewish boy, became old enough to consider these matters for himself, he would become conscious that there were differences of opinion among his people at many of these points. He would find that certain groups among them differed from other groups in what they believed, and, what was more important, he would find that they differed in what they taught and in what they did. There were different interpretations of the law and what it required; the dietary laws were not universally kept in the same way; the Sabbath was observed differently by different groups of Jews. Some of them thought it obligatory to observe certain fasts which others disregarded, but whatever was the difference in the degree or in the manner of observing laws and customs, it is nevertheless true that Jesus found himself, as did every other Jewish boy, growing up in a religious world in which the institutional equipment was very rigid.

II. Jesus' Experience of Conformity to Custom

Such was the institutional equipment of the religion into which Jesus grew. Now let us consider what we can learn of Jesus' experiences. We remember that an early story of Jesus states that as he grew older he gained in wisdom and won the approval of God and men, and that as he was in his home in Nazareth he was obedient to his parents, Luke 2:39-40. As a particular example of this general statement there is told in

Luke 2:41-50 that charming story of Jesus' boyhood visit to the Temple. Nothing can be more likely than that this represents some actual experience. Doubtless Jesus frequently was taken to Jerusalem and, on such occasions, had the satisfaction of visiting this central institution. Again, the Gospel according to Luke in chapter 4:16-30 tells another charming story of how Jesus, upon returning to his boyhood home entered, "as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." Back of this there is implied, doubtless with truth, the formation of a habit in the experiences of childhood and youth. It may be inferred from these brief stories that Jesus' experiences in childhood and youth were those of the normal Jewish boy, and that just as he obtained satisfaction from the visits to the temple, and as it was a habit of long standing for him to attend the synagogue, so too he came to experience the full range of institutional life in the Jewish religion. Of course, exactly what customs he was taught to observe, and exactly how he was taught to observe them depended largely upon the particular group and the particular place to which he belonged. Since there was such wide variety, it is to be inferred that Jesus' experiences were determined largely by the particular group customs and habits of his own people.

When we come to that period of Jesus' life about which we know the most, this inference becomes even clearer. Luke's reference, already cited, of Jesus' custom of attending the synagogue, is told in a story of Jesus' adult life at which time, according to the story, Jesus was regarded by the synagogue officials as a proper person to be asked to read the lesson from the prophets and further to be invited to give the exposition of the lesson in that ancient equivalent of the sermon which was customary in the synagogue of Jesus' day. The gospels unite in reporting that Jesus frequently attended the synagogue and that he naturally made use of them in his ministry. Read Mark 1:21-28, 39; 3:1-6; Matt. 4:23-25; 9:35-38; Luke 4:44; 13:10-17; John 6:52-59; 18:19, 20. To be sure, it is commonly inferred from the gospel according to Mark that Jesus at an early period in his ministry came into conflict with the synagogue authorities, and it is erroneously concluded that at this time he ceased to use them. However, the contrary is suggested in other portions of the gospel. For example, in the gospel of John 18:20, Jesus says "I always taught in your synagogues" and the story in Luke 13:10-17, which implies attendance at, and the use of, the synagogue in the later phases of Jesus' ministry; so that it is entirely probable that the habit of which Luke speaks was of such long standing that the satisfaction which Jesus received from synagogue attendance resulted in his constant use of that institution.

There is another hint in the gospel stories of Jesus' use of a particular Jewish institutional custom. When Matthew in 9:20 and Luke in 8:44 tell the story of the woman touching Jesus' garment they, as distinct from Mark 5:27, use a word which is technical. The word used means literally the *fringe*, or *tassel*, which, according to the Pharisaic interpretation of the law, as in Deut. 22:12, led to this particular design on the clothing which was worn by the Jewish people who observed the custom. Now, if this word is to be understood technically, the implication is clear that Jesus followed the Pharisaic interpretation and wore the clothing as prescribed by this legalistic institution.

Further, Jesus' experience of the institutional side of Judaism appears by implication, at least, in the gospel stories of his apparent conflicts over these particular matters. The gospels tell the story, for example, of Jesus cleansing the Temple. Read Mark 11:15-19; Matt. 21:12-17; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-16. Now, it is true that this act implies a certain negative judgment of the institution, but when the stories are carefully read to observe Jesus' motive in cleansing the Temple, it appears that Jesus must have had a fundamental appreciation of the institution and that it was his purpose to purify it of certain abuses, and not that his act is to be taken as implying on his part any negative attitude toward the institution itself.

Likewise the gospels tell certain stories of Jesus and the custom of fasting. Read Mark 2:18-22; Matt. 9:14-17; Luke 5:33-39; Matt. 6:16-18. The conclusion is usually drawn that Jesus had a negative attitude toward this custom. In this matter it must be observed that a difference of opinion was entirely appropriate, and as a matter of fact did obtain among the Jewish people of Jesus' day. There was only one fast which was obligatory on all Jews, namely, the Day of Atonement, and there is no suggestion that Jesus repudiated this institution. Whether in addition to this fast other fasts were to be observed was simply a matter of one's interpretation of what the law required and the custom of the local group to which one belonged. To be sure, certain other fasts had become customarily observed by some groups and it is a reasonable hypothesis that, as these groups attempted to make them obligatory generally, conflicts arose. But however this may be, the fact is that a loyal Jew could refuse to observe these voluntary fasts without repudiating the institution of fasting itself.

To take another example, the gospel stories have much to say about Jesus and the Sabbath. Read Mark 2:22-38; Matt. 12:1-8; Luke 6:1-5; Mark 3:1-6; Matt. 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-17; 13:10-17. In this matter it is very commonly concluded that the teaching of Jesus involves the re-

pudiation of the Jewish law, but, as on other occasions, the stories do not necessarily involve this conclusion. It will be recalled that the Jewish law, being ambiguous, required interpretation. See Exod. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15, the one an interpretation of the other. Now, exactly what was work and what was not work was debatable and the result was different groups of Jews had different opinions on the matter, so that different Jewish groups were characterized by different customs in observing the Sabbath. In this instance, then, the experience of Jesus may well have been that of a person who appreciated the institution, and who, as was proper to any intelligent Jewish religious person, availed himself of the privilege of exercising his own judgment in the details of Sabbath observance.

The problem becomes more difficult when Jesus' experience of the dietary laws is involved. The gospel according to Mark tells a story of certain Jewish leaders who objected when they saw that some of Jesus' disciples ate their food without first observing certain laws of ceremonial purification. Read Mark 7:1-5. As the story goes on, verses 6-23, the teaching of Jesus considers several matters which are implied by these objections. It is very commonly concluded that the teaching of Jesus involves the repudiation of these laws. It is proper to observe, however, that it was the writer of the gospel according to Mark who drew this conclusion, for he remarks in 7:19 that what Jesus said had the effect of making all foods clean. Further it is noteworthy that the Gospel according to Matthew in telling this story does not draw this conclusion. Read Matt. 15:1-20. The careful reading of this story brings to light certain qualifications. In the first place, as the story is told, there is no report of any objection on the part of these Pharisaic leaders to the behavior of Jesus himself. Their objection is to the behavior of Jesus' followers and, indeed, only to some of them. Further, the conclusion which the gospel writer draws is his own conclusion stated on his own authority. He is not, in reporting it, making this a saying of Jesus. It is, in fact, an editorial statement. One can only ask, upon making such distinctions as are required, what were the probabilities. Is it probable that Jesus disregarded the Jewish dietary laws as such in any wholesale manner? The opposite is the probability in the case. Even today there are many Jews who are by no means loyal to their religion who nevertheless observe certain of the dietary customs. Such being the case, it is entirely likely that, critical as he may have been about certain Jewish laws in detail, Jesus in the particular case of the dietary laws followed the legal prescriptions, at least in general. In this case, again, it is known that different groups of Jewish people differed in the details of following customs of

ritual purification, and, if, as is implied by the story, Jesus is in this case making some pronouncement in defense of his followers, he is doing only what he is known to have done in other cases, namely, offering his judgment in a matter in which difference of opinion was common and proper.

There is, however, one aspect of Jesus' experience of Jewish institutional equipment in which the implications are all in the direction of his assuming a negative attitude. There are certain teachings of Jesus which involve an attitude toward Scripture and these, even more than the story of his teaching on ceremonial purification, suggest a break with the common Jewish judgment. When he was asked, as the gospels report, about the propriety of divorce, his teachings as reported by Mark and Matthew in Mark 10:2-12; Matt. 19:3-12 (see also Matt. 5:32 and Luke 16:18) show that he was willing to reject the common attitude of Jews toward their sacred Scripture. In this matter there is no doubt that the Jewish law, Deut. 24:1-3, permitted a man to divorce his wife when, as Mark puts it, Jesus taught that he had not that right. His alleged teaching is in basic contradiction to the plain teaching of the Jewish law. When further, as the story puts it, Jesus was asked why Moses commanded the divorce decree to be written, Jesus answered that this permission was given because of their hardness of heart, and he substitutes for the permission of the law the principle of an ideal relationship. The implication is clear that the teaching of Jesus sets up a higher standard than the standard of the Jewish law and effectually marks his rejection of the law, at least at this point. It is true that the teachings of the gospels about divorce have certain significant differences, but it is also true that there is fundamental agreement in the stories at this point, and it must be concluded that if these gospel stories contain the actual teachings of Jesus, in this one point at least there is implied a negative attitude toward one item of the Jewish institutional equipment which was of basic and fundamental import.

What is one to conclude then, in general, of Jesus' experiences of Jewish religious institutions? It is clear that with reference to religious institutions Jesus was not an iconoclast. There are many Christians who, in their desire to realize what they conceive to be the standard of Jesus, act on the judgment that he was in so nearly a complete degree negative in his attitude toward the institutional equipment of his religion that they make him essentially an iconoclast. The contrary is true. The habits formed in Jesus' youth, customs which he took over from his religious and social groups, and the deliberate use which, on the basis of his own judgment, he made of such Jewish institutions as the Scripture and the synagogue, show that, although he used all of these institutions critically,

he nevertheless used them. He found satisfaction in them, and in his ministry he continued to use them and to find satisfaction in them. He loved the scriptures. He habitually attended the synagogue, he valued the sacrificial system centering in the Temple, and he observed in his own religious life certain of the customs which were taught by the law itself and were observed by the people with whom he associated.

But it does appear from the stories of Jesus' religious experiences that he used these religious institutions with discrimination, and from the experience of Jesus it is possible for us to observe the principles which guided him. It will be seen that in his use and experiences with religious institutions Jesus developed a principle of critical appreciation. Is not this the valuable implication of these stories? Is not this what we learn of a young man, taught and habituated in the use of certain institutions, who applied his own judgment and intelligence to the questions of his own religious life? Take, for example, the cleansing of the Temple. This was an act in which Jesus, far from repudiating the Temple itself, saw in the customs of its use certain abuses which needed correction and which when corrected went far to restore the institution to the use for which it was intended. Again, is not this an example of the gospel stories of Jesus in connection with the Sabbath customs? Jesus, although his own behavior was not always questioned, defended the customs of his followers. He insisted that if a man was hungry he had a right to use what was available and to make it fit for use even on the Sabbath day. He affirmed that it was right to attempt to restore an infirm man, even though his life was not in immediate danger, on that day. The Sabbath as an institution was good, but it must be regarded as a religious means, and not as an end in itself. In that principle stated in the gospels (for which there is a parallel in the Jewish literature) that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, there is that humanitarian principle which shows one that Jesus himself, sympathetic to a religious institution, did not propose to have himself or his followers subjected to it.

The effect of his teaching was to interpret the laws governing institutions in such a way that the institution would be perpetuated and would, at the same time, be made serviceable for the people for whose benefit it had been instituted. And probably here is the criterion by which other difficult questions of Jesus' relation to Jewish institutions may be answered. Doubtless he would have been capable, as the Gospel suggests, of offering reasons for his particular customs of ritual cleanliness, the preparation of food, and the choice of food. In other words, doubtless in his case, accepting the institution, he was capable of making his own critical appreciation of it. So too in the questions about fasting. Since there

is implied no rejection of the institution it is fair to conclude that the teaching which is ascribed to Jesus was based upon the same principle of the critical appreciation of the institution, but a definition of its use which was designed to insure its humanitarian serviceability. So, too, we are to think of Jesus' use of the Scripture as a religious institution. There is no questioning his love for it nor the benefit which he received from it, but it is probable that Jesus used the institution of Scripture critically and that in his critical appreciation of it the same goal of humanitarian purpose was uppermost in his mind.

III. Jesus' Experience of Religious Institutions as Avenues of Approach to God

What we must see, then, is that in Jesus' experience in his use of these religious institutions he was experiencing God. It may be difficult for some of us to see how anyone could have obtained religious satisfaction from the observance of the minutiae of Jewish law. There are those of us who are so thoroughly non-ritualistic that it is difficult for us to see how anyone can obtain spiritual help from a highly organized religious ritual, but we have only to look about us to see that many Jewish people still obtain helpful satisfaction from the observance of the minutiae of legalistic customs, and that many Christians derive spiritual satisfaction from highly ritualistic services of worship.

It is certainly true that Jesus found God through his experiences with reference to those religious institutions. For example, it is relatively easy for us to see how he found God through the use of the Jewish Scripture. To be sure, as we have seen, it was through the critical *use* of Scripture, but nevertheless it is true that Jesus found God through this particular institution. Even though it may be more difficult for us to understand how he experienced God through such institutions as fasting, the sacrificial system, or ceremonial purification, it is essential that we understand that Jesus in his Jewish environment is a person who did not radically differ from his fellow-Jews at these points. It is worthy of re-emphasis that in the gospel stories which recount Jesus' defense of certain of his followers who were accused of "forsaking the customs of their fathers" it is not suggested, for example, in the matter of Sabbath observance, fasting, or of ritual cleansing that there was objection to the practice of Jesus himself.

One can only conclude, therefore, from the fact that Jesus used these institutions, that he found them useful. Jesus was far less radical than, for example, the prophet Micah whose statement, 6:6-8, implies that

no intermediary, no victim, no sacred place was necessary in the relationship of man with his God. One gathers the impression that the religious life of Jesus was fairly similar to that of the typical, normal Jew of his own day, and, therefore, that however critically he may have used them, he found the law, the Scripture, the synagogue, the Sabbath, certain dietary customs, certain fasts and feasts, the sacrificial system, and the Temple to be avenues to God for himself in his own religious experience as many another Jew had found them.

IV. Experience of God through Modern Equivalents

If such was Jesus' experience of God through the religious institutions of his day, what can we gain for our own needs from his experience? We, too, find ourselves part of a more or less well-equipped religious institutionalism. To be sure, there are Christians, such as the members of the Society of Friends, who see to it that the institutional equipment of their religion is kept to the minimum, but in any case the contemporary Christian finds himself in contact with certain religious institutions. As Jesus had the synagogue we have our church; as Jesus had the Jewish Scripture so we have our Old and New Testaments. While for Jesus all aspects of life, civil as well as religious, were controlled by the legalistic institutions of his religion, we conveniently separate civil laws from religious customs, but we all admit that there is an important relationship between our religion and our observance of law. Further, while our religious customs are, as a rule, of a less rigid articulation than would permit them to be called laws, yet certain religious groups in our day have developed parallels to the legalistic institutions of ancient Judaism. Certain Protestant denominations have group standards which are so well crystallized that they have the practical effect of laws, and certain other Christians subject themselves to a rigorous disciplinary examination by their priests and voluntarily accept a system of punishment for infraction of religious standards in a way which strongly suggests certain legalistic aspects of the religion of Jesus. Many Christians have their customs of fasting, and there are parallels in contemporary Christianity of the dietary regulations of the ancient Jews, although it is true that these regulations seldom involve the detail of the Jewish customs. Many Christian churches have a ministry, the orders of which are, as were the Jewish, institutionally controlled.

What might a typical Christian of today be expected to learn from Jesus' experience of God through religious institutions? In the first place he would do well to take cognizance of the fact that it is possible for one

to experience God through religious institutions. It is highly desirable that many contemporary Christians learn the virtue of toleration for those whose religion is much more ritualistic than their own, and that they should find it possible to credit people who appreciate ritual with the achievement of finding God and achieving spiritual satisfaction through ritual. It is an interesting religious exercise for a typical American to participate in the religious exercises of an Eastern Orthodox church, or in general for a nonliturgical Christian to become acquainted with such a liturgical type of worship as is maintained by the Anglican church.

This is only another way of realizing what is implied by the fact that Jesus, so far from being an iconoclast with reference to religious institutions, was one who appreciated and used them. As one item of this particular aspect of contemporary religion may be mentioned the trend toward the enrichment of worship in nonliturgical churches. In this particular interest of Christianity in our day something may be learned from the experience of Jesus. The best lesson would be learned by one who approached the matter as Jesus did, from the point of view of critical appreciation, so that one will find his satisfaction, not in an enriched ritual for its own sake, so that one can lose by taking refuge in an ornate ritual as a means of escape from the social crisis of our contemporary life, but that he may find in a relatively highly developed service of worship the means for experiencing God.

In the second place one may apply Jesus' principle of critical appreciation to all of our contemporary religious institutions. One might evaluate the church itself as an institution, and in detail make a similar evaluation of its different parts or aspects, of its ministers, of its social and religious customs, of the degree to which it is realizing in its many situations what may be taken as its legitimate purpose. In other words, one may ask what practical lesson may be learned from Jesus' cleansing of the Temple. Are there factors about the denomination to which one belongs, about the local church of which one is a member, which require an attempt at critical evaluation? What are the implications of the economic aspects of our modern churches? What ought one to think of the growing practice of endowing local churches? What should be one's judgment of the enormous sums expended in church-building? What would one say, in the light of Jesus' experience, of the growing custom of uniting local churches? Similarly one might ask what is the implication of Jesus' experience for the economic integration of our church denominations into the society of our times? What ought one to think, in the light of Jesus' experience, of the fact that a certain Christian denomination has a float-

ing debt of a half-million dollars in its Board of Foreign Missions? What is the proper judgment of the control of ministers by wealthy laymen, so that ministers are not free to express themselves with reference to social and economic issues, such as child labor or the race problem? One might raise the important question of the influence of economic motives in the missionary methods of many of our Christian denominations. Again, when we think of Jesus' ideal of restoring the Jewish temple to its function as a house of prayer for the people of all nations, one may ask what attitude one should take with reference to the racial exclusiveness of some of our religious denominations and local churches.

Third, it is possible that one might raise questions similar to those raised in the day of Jesus about the effect upon people of some of our religious customs, for example, our modern parallels to the ancient Jewish feasts and fasts, raising the question whether man was made for these customs, or whether these customs were made for man. Further, it might be relevant to bring to our conception of Scripture the experience of Jesus. To what extent does the modern Christian find his Scripture to be a means to finding God, or an instrument for spiritual satisfaction, or on the other hand, to be an end in itself? Is it possible that there are points where the human value must be considered on the basis of some higher principle than merely of the content of Scripture concerning it? Take the very question which was asked Jesus for which he gave an answer on a higher basis than that of the Scripture standard, the question of marriage and divorce. It is possible that the particular stresses involved in the pressure of the complex economic and social forces in modern life may make it advisable for Christian groups to develop standards and judgments by reference to the human factors involved, rather than by the simple expedient of using the content of Scripture to obtain the answer to this difficult problem. Why, for example, should so many Christian denominations take the position that only sexual immorality is legitimate ground for divorce? One denomination has recently taken the position that other offenses are equivalent to adultery, and permits its ministers to perform the marriage ceremony for persons who otherwise might not be married by its ministers. To be sure, other churches refuse the sacrament of marriage to persons who are for any reason divorced. What ought one to conclude is suggested by the experience of Jesus?

In other words, in what way can we apply Jesus' principle of critical appreciation to the religious institutions of our day? It is probable that most Christians, who, like Jesus, have grown up within religious institutions and have thus become habituated to them, will begin with appreci-

ation and the continued use of them. It is possible that, learning from the experience of Jesus, many persons may go from this basic appreciation to certain critical evaluations. Even though he may love his church and enjoy its service of worship, and respect its ministry and desire to incorporate in his life its standards, he may yet, like Jesus, find details which are in need of correction. He may, in a critical examination of all the religious institutional equipment of his life make certain critical evaluations. He may find that his institutional equipment has lagged behind the needs brought to the contemporary religious life by the complex society of our present day, so that the institutional side of his religion is not altogether adequate at all points to meet the problems brought to him by our modern life. He may, in such situations, apply Jesus' principle of critical appreciation. The effect may be twofold. On the one hand he may find certain customs outgrown and no longer of value, which should be dropped and forgotten. On the other hand he may find it desirable to introduce modifications of the old institutions. Sometimes he may find it necessary to introduce entirely new customs. If he has, as a motive for what he finds it necessary to do, that basic principle of humanitarian serviceability, he may find that he has learned from the religious experience of Jesus.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name some of the religious institutions to which Jesus was habituated and which he observed in his own home.
2. Discuss his boyhood relation to the synagogue and the Temple.
3. What seems to have been his boyhood attitude toward all the religious institutions of his day?
4. How would the existence of various interpretations of the religious laws affect his own later interpretation of them?
5. What evidence have you that the people respected his judgment in religious matters after he began to speak publicly?
6. What was the significance of the cleansing of the Temple?
7. On what grounds did Jesus differ from the strict Pharisees in his attitude toward the Sabbath laws?
8. What can we infer from incidents cited in the study in regard to his interpretation of the food laws?
9. What privilege did he demand in his use of the Jewish Scriptures?
10. How would you state the general principle upon which Jesus decided the genuine worth of an institution or custom?
11. What satisfaction did Jesus probably gain from (a) the synagogue, (b) the temple, (c) the Scriptures?
12. How would you say that he "found God" through them?
13. Would the same customs and observances lead us to see God more clearly? If not, why?

14. What is our modern equivalent for (a) the synagogue and the Temple, (b) sacrifice, (c) the Jewish Scriptures, (d) fasting and feasting, (e) the priesthood, (f) the Jewish Sabbath, (g) the Mosaic law? Which of these modern religious institutions helps you the most?
15. Have we any other institutions of religion which we value?
16. What relation has modern civic law to religious living?
17. Is it right for us to take the attitude of Jesus toward the Scriptures?
18. How has religion suffered from the wrong use of the Scriptures?
19. Is humanitarian serviceability as valuable a standard for religious institutions today as Jesus felt it to be in his day?
20. How can we prepare ourselves to take the attitude of critical evaluation toward religious institutions of our own day?
21. How shall we be guided if we are not so prepared?

Study VII

Jesus' Experience of God through Facing Apparent Defeat of His Ideal of Establishing the Kingdom of God

BY SHAILER MATHEWS

To understand Jesus fully, one must see him in his own day, in the midst of his own people. The Jews of the New Testament period were not the Hebrews of the Old Testament. The kingdoms of David and Solomon were as far away from them as King Alfred is from a modern Englishman. The little state which they had established had been successively the subject of Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Alexander, the Syrians, and the Romans. It had enjoyed a few years of independence under the Maccabees, but it had been too small and too poor to resist the expanding power of Rome. Even under Herod the Great it had been a subject kingdom, taking its policies from Augustus. Furthermore, Palestine had ceased to be an exclusively Jewish territory. The Greeks had swarmed into all of its cities with the exception of Jerusalem, and even the city of Samaria and the worship of Jehovah were threatened by the worship of the gods of the Roman empire, to whom temples were built in many cities. One can still see the ruins of the Decapolis (or the Ten Cities) on the east of the Jordan and of its capital on the west of the Jordan. The little country had been broken into several administrative districts. The two sons of Herod were appointed Tetrarchs in Galilee and north and east of the Jordan, but the land south from the great plain of Esdraelon to the desert was directly administered by the Roman empire, represented by the procurator at Caesarea. The Tetrarchs were themselves subject to Rome. The Jewish people had altogether lost their national independence.

I. The Hope for a Triumphant Judaism

But they had not lost their national pride. They were the one monotheistic people of the Roman empire, and they saw in their God Jehovah the Creator of the universe and the Master of history. It was

incredible that He should leave his people indefinitely in a state of subjection. That would be contrary to his own position as the one God of the universe, and their position as his chosen people. In the minds of the more pious Jews there could be but one outcome of their period of subjection. God would establish them in supreme power. Rome would be conquered and the people of Jehovah would be the masters of the world.

While the term "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven" is not frequently used in the Jewish literature which has survived from the century just preceding New Testament times, the idea was in the minds of the people. Just how it was to be established the Jews did not altogether agree. Some believed that God would empower a man to accomplish what seemed beyond human power. At other times this Empowered or Anointed One was not so much in mind. But all who expected the coming of the better day, taking for their ideal that of the later prophets, were convinced that it would involve the supremacy of the law of Jehovah and all nations would worship in his temple. Read the verses found in both Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3. Thus the messianic hope was both national and religious. Anything like the later Christian conception of a heaven which men entered regardless of their ancestry and national relations was lacking.

The hope for the kingdom involved political revolution as truly as religious loyalty. The kingdom was to be established by the defeat and destruction of enemies, either by the Messiah (Anointed or Empowered) who should slay them with the word of his mouth, or by a nation empowered by the spirit of God to defeat military resources superior to their own. The literature of the time reveals the intense and bitter spirit of this religious patriotism. The apocalyptic literature,¹ which began to appear about the middle of the second century before Christ, is a sort of code language of revolution intended to encourage those Jews who had not yielded to the influence of Hellenism and were awaiting a call to revolt against the Romans. It represents biblical characters as receiving visions of the Jews' future. It is not pleasant reading. Behind its symbolism one sees the lust to make enemies suffer both before and after death. The triumph of God was to be terrible in its consequences to the enemies of the Jewish state.

The kingdom of God was to come by revolution directed by divine wisdom and successful through divine power. There were, of course,

¹ The book of Revelation in our New Testament is written in this style although coming from a much later period and having the persecuted Christians, rather than the Jews, as its readers. Some of the apocalyptic books with which Jesus may have been acquainted were the *Book of Enoch*, the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, IV, *Esdras*.

thousands who did not share such an expectation. The well-to-do people and those who sympathized with the administration of Rome and who, like the Sadducees, profited from such relations had no revolutionary enthusiasm. They were ready to keep the law of Moses so far as the worship in the Temple was concerned, but they were not ready to prepare for revolt or even to expect that God would approve of revolution. The vast numbers of Jews who were scattered throughout the cities of the empire shared more or less in the religious hope, but they do not seem ever to have given any support to the plans for revolution. However loyal they might be to the Temple, and however much they might share in the privilege accorded the Jewish people by Rome because of the services of Herod the Great to Julius Caesar, they were not in position to share in any national uprising. In so far as they expected the kingdom of heaven, they were content to think of it abstractly as a phase of their religion, being careful not to antagonize their political masters.

II. The Revolutionary Psychology of Jesus' Day

In large sections of the Jewish people, however, there was a more or less expressed revolutionary psychology. In Palestine this attitude varied from that of those who were content to let the establishment of the Jewish empire wait upon God's will, to that of those who believed that God would assist his people if once they broke into open revolt. All parties were agreed that the kingdom would come by violence, and all looked with bitterness upon their present situation. All expected that the kingdom would be established only after a period of terrible conflict and suffering. For a generation after the time of Jesus this revolutionary ferment continued until at last in A.D. 66 those whom we might call the party of direct action organized a revolt and precipitated a struggle with Rome which lasted for three years or more. It was terribly suppressed only to break out again in the second century and culminated with the destruction of the revolutionaries and the city of Jerusalem.

This psychological attitude must be constantly borne in mind if one is to get the full understanding of the teaching of Jesus. Like his revolutionary contemporaries, he believed in and awaited the kingdom of God. He urged men to prepare for its immediate coming. But the revolution which he proposed was that of repentance rather than that of the armed man. Men would prepare for the kingdom of God by having that attitude toward their fellows which God himself possessed toward the world. There is no evidence that he thought that men could bring in the kingdom. That was to be done by God, who was to give it to his children

whenever he saw fit. They were to wait for it and prepare for it, but they were not to endeavor to bring it in. Above all, Jesus tried to show them that a spirit of hatred and desire to injure enemies was contrary to the love of God. The preparation which men were to make was a preparation of the heart. They were to be brothers of men if they were to be sons of the Most High. Instead of revolt, they were to submit to the authorities and not return violence for violence, injustice for injustice. Read Matthew 5:3, 10, 17-48 as picturing on the one hand the ideals of Jesus, and indirectly those of the righteous people of his day concerning the kingdom of God. The conflict in these ideas comes out still more clearly in chapters 6 and 7 in all of which is implicit not alone the attitude of Jesus but the customary attitudes of the Pharisees and his belief that membership in the kingdom of God must have its basis in brotherly conduct.

III. Jesus and the Kingdom of God

Jesus nowhere defined the kingdom of God. He showed what it involved and assumed it as the term of the greatest good which men could have, membership in which was the greatest happiness possible. When he began to preach that the great day was at hand and that the kingdom of heaven was soon to appear, the restless people of Galilee came to him, evidently expecting that he would be the leader of a revolt which would express their messianic hope and institute the glorious empire which they expected.

Why men thus came to him is not difficult to see in the light of what we know from Josephus about the times in which he lived. Almost any man who preached revolt or who was understood to plan revolt would get a following. The remarkable thing is that men and women continued to believe in him as the Christ when he was opposing their thoughts of vengeance and was not doing what they expected the Christ would do. In other words, they followed him as the Christ in the sense that he was the one who was *about* to do the messianic work. Their loyalty was based on the hope that he would fulfil their own preconceptions. It was his personality, his power to cure, his ability as a teacher, and perhaps as much as anything his ability to cast out demons, that kept them loyal.

This latter fact is difficult for us with our recent psychology to understand, but gains meaning as one recalls that the messianic hope of the Jew had gradually come to include a belief that the success of their oppressors, as well as the miseries of life, were due to Satan who had in some mysterious way gained control of the existing social order or "this world."

The fact that Jesus could cast out demons led some to feel that he was more than a healer of diseases. He was the representative of God in the struggle with the supernatural world that was supporting the national enemies. Others, however, felt that his power over these demons showed only that he was an emissary of Satan. Read Matthew 9:32-34; 12:22-36.

IV. The Struggle between the Two Ideas of God's Kingdom

It is not difficult from these facts to see how a struggle must have arisen between Jesus and the contemporary ideas of the kingdom of God. It was not a mere theological difference, it was a struggle between two conceptions of the way in which God would set up the ideal social order, and of the preparation which men must make for that order. All enthusiasts for law, like the Pharisees, would insist that the kingdom could not come until God's law was kept by the nation perfectly. But of this they had very little hope. The common people were ignorant of the niceties of law-observance, and the educational methods of the synagogue did not seem to be capable of breaking down this ignorance. Recall *Study I* in which the education of youth is described. On the other hand, they could not think of God except in the pattern of their national religion, and even if Gentiles were to share in the divine blessing they were to become Jews. Read Isaiah 56:6-8. Nationalism had become a phase of religion and in large sections of the Jewish people the hope of the divine intervention in history became identical with violence and revolt.

Throughout his brief ministry Jesus was thus face to face with something more than external difficulties. He had men's deepest convictions with which to deal. Those who joined him would be those already possessed of the revolutionary spirit and these he would have to instruct as to what the kingdom of God really meant and what were the true conditions of entrance into it and of sharing in its joys. The mere fact that crowds followed him might easily become a source of danger. Even his power to work cures and cast out demons might be interpreted as preliminary to a call to revolution. He tried to meet this danger by selecting certain persons whom he instructed more fully and made heralds of his own message. Read Matthew 10:1-23. He never, however, succeeded in disabusing their minds of their preconceptions. They could remember his words and could be loyal to him as a prospective messianic deliverer, but they were not able to take his own point of view or grasp the message which he gave, Matt. 11:2-11. They still were swayed by religious nationalism with its need of miracles. While he attempted to teach them

the power of love, they were waiting for the miraculous triumph of force. While they followed him they did not understand him. Read Matthew 13:1-13, 24-30, 31-32, 33, 44, 45-46, 47.

V. Jesus Sees God's Hand in the Loyalty of His Disciples

The last six months of Jesus' life were months of disillusion. The crowds that gathered around him were still great, but he saw in them no whole-hearted acceptance of his message. However he might himself have been convinced that he was doing the preliminary work of a Messiah, he was not accepted as the Messiah by them. It is true they saw in him a person quite superior to the professional teachers of the synagogue and the schools, but their estimate of him did not rise above one of the illustrious dead restored to life. They thought him to be Elijah or some other of the prophets, or even John the Baptist. Read Matthew 16:13-16. The selected group of his immediate friends who constituted the initial community of the Christian church, accepted him as the one who was to do the messianic work, but they could not disabuse their minds of their nationalist hopes. They continued even after his death to expect him to restore the kingdom to Israel. Read Acts 1:6-8. This little group of fishermen, tax collectors, revolutionists, with their wives and other believing women, was without social standing and was subject to misinterpretation by those who felt themselves responsible for the religious and social order. The similarity between his teachings and those of the religious leaders, which have been noticed by recent scholars, was not sufficient to establish sympathy between them and himself. The earlier expectation which he had, that his mission would be successful (John, chap. 4), had been succeeded by growing tension. It is not difficult to see why this should have arisen. His own conception of God's fatherliness had led him to see that preparation for the coming of the kingdom of God was not one of punctilious observation of the customs which generations of acute interpreters had given the law. Instead of a severe king, he had seen in God a father who was willing to forgive all those who possessed a forgiving spirit, Luke 15:11-31. While this did not lead him to break with his people's religion and set up an independent movement, it exposed him to the unfriendly estimate which professional ecclesiastics place on the non-professional faith of laymen. In a way he forced the issue by his criticism of the Pharisees and lawyers. His disregard of directions for keeping the Sabbath, his refusal to insist upon fasting and ceremonial cleansing were all calculated to arouse suspicion and hostility on the part of those to whom such requirements seemed the

logical outcome of the Mosaic law. His popular following seemed a threat of revolution to those who dreaded any conflict with Rome and remembered the punishment which had followed the rise of leaders who had organized revolts in Galilee. For the Galileans, as Josephus tells us, were notoriously restless and ready for revolution. That this fear was not unwarranted, later events showed.

When one remembers the suspicion with which Roman emperors looked on anything approaching community action, and the sensitiveness of the responsible Jewish leaders, it is not surprising that the movement which Jesus inaugurated should have been regarded as dangerous to both ecclesiastical and political peace. Ultimately he was to fall a victim to this suspicion of being a revolutionist, and he was finally executed as "the King of the Jews."

When, despite all these circumstances, his disciples continued to regard him as the Christ, he saw in their faith the work of God. The Father had given it to them (Matt. 16:17). They as well as he could be recipients of spiritual insight. They like himself were sharing in the sense of God's fatherliness.

VI. Jesus' Experience of God as He Realizes His Rejection by the Religious Leaders of His People

At its beginning Jesus regarded his mission as being particularly to the Jews. He wished his nation to become the herald of a kindly God, and of a morality which centered around the democratizing of privilege rather than reliance upon military revolt or religious pride. The opposition of religious leaders was therefore to him a keen disappointment, although he came to see in it a revelation of the will of the Father and called upon all distracted souls to find the peace which he felt in such a conviction. Read Matthew 11:25-30. This disillusionment forced him to look realistically at his nation, but it did not tend to modify his conviction that he was sent to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The controversy in which he found himself engaged was therefore in a way a defense against a deeply rooted social attitude. It would have been easy for him to have headed a revolt, but such a policy was contrary to his conception of God's character, and his ideals for those who wish to share in the joys of the kingdom which he expected. He could engage in conflict with satanic powers and by the finger of God cast out demons. In this conflict he felt the presence of God's spirit, and his success he described as an indication of the nearness of the kingdom of God. But while his help to disintegrated personalities was a conflict it was also an

expression of divine love, an argument for men's devotion to service and a guaranty that love is practicable as a basis for social relations. But such ethical idealism did not mitigate the danger which others saw in his movement. They united to crush it.

VII. New Experience of God as He Extends His Mission to Non-Jews

To save his work from premature destruction at the hands of a political and ecclesiastical junta, he left Galilee and, accompanied by a group of his intimate followers he left Jewish territory and went into that of Tyre and Sidon. Read Matthew 15:21-28. Here he was out of reach of the authorities in Galilee and Judea. His purpose was clearly that of gaining opportunity to instruct his disciples more particularly as to his own belief and mission. Unexpectedly it brought a new conception of his mission and an extension of his activities to those who were not Jews. And it gave him new experience of God as his faith grew in moments of tension and trial.

It is thus we must interpret the episode of his dealing with the Canaanitish woman who wished him to help her daughter. When she made the first call for such help, Jesus remained consistent with his general program. He declined to perform a cure on the ground that it was not lawful to "take the children's food and give it to the dogs." His answer sounds harsh in our English version, but is softened as one thinks of it as a sort of proverb with which he closes his declination. The woman's repartee, however, brought illumination to him for "it was lawful," she argued, "to give the dogs the crumbs which fell from the children's table." Jesus recognized in the mother's persistence a genuine faith, such as he had previously found in the Roman centurion, a faith which he had not found, even in Israel. Read Matthew 8:5-13.

However much he may previously have struggled with the limitations set by ethnic relations, this episode appears to be the beginning of a new phase in his activities. He goes north and swings around east of Galilee into the region of Decapolis, a region composed of Greek cities. There he also worked miracles, and the people "glorified the God of Israel," Matt. 15:29-31. From this time on Jesus seems to have discovered a new significance in God's love. The kingdom was not to be limited to Jews, although it had been first offered to them. It was like the feast to which a man called his friends, only to find that they were occupied by incidental, secondary motives from accepting the invitation, whereupon others were to be called, even the very tramps who slept in the

hedges. The feast was to be furnished with guests, Matt. 22:1-9. Or it was like a man who planted a vineyard and gave it in charge of his servants and then found that these slaves were unwilling to receive his representative, even his son himself, and were therefore to be punished, Matt. 21:33-46.

Such parables are really intended by the evangelist to show that the kingdom of God was not to be limited to Jews, that the love of God could be extended to all. The fact that Jesus, as his representative, could cure those who were not Jews, was evidence of the universality of the divine love. The experience of Jesus in extending his program was a new experience of the will of the Heavenly Father.

It is the sort of spiritual growth that may be expected by everyone who finds the basic principle of Christ's teaching broader than any initial conception. As Jesus when a boy "grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and with man" so as a man, loyal to his central faith in God as love, he outgrew his Jewish limitations and came to see that the kingdom of God was open to anyone, regardless of birth, who was possessed of a faith and a religious attitude which were like that of the Heavenly Father toward the evil and the good. Such growth on his part is thus set forth in the gospels as being due to his experience of God in his own activity. In a way it might be said to be a duplication in his individual experience of that growth in his people's religion in which the God of a tribe was increasingly seen by the prophets to be the God of all nations, and finally of the world itself. In this respect it may be shared by all those who, loyal to the principle of love, endeavor to do good and serve all persons. As Jesus, in passing beyond the limitations of his original program, found new appreciation of the extent of his mission and the love of the Heavenly Father, so the modern Christian, by following his example, is led to transcend racial and social barriers and treat all those with whom he comes in contact as persons who are brothers and with whom he can share that which he has found helpful to himself.

This new experience of God was expressed in Jesus' words to Peter. Seeking to avoid the hostile plans of others, Jesus had taken his disciples to the region of Caesarea Philippi, which Philip the Tetrarch had made an asylum for political offenders. There, on the side of the mountain, from which the Jordan bursts at the mouth of a great cave, which for centuries had been sacred to heathen deities, Jesus brought to self-consciousness and confession the faith of his disciples. Over against the crude supernaturalism of the people at large, he heard them declare that they believed he was the Christ, Matt. 16:13-20. So contrary was his life to the disciples' preconception as to what the Messiah should be that

he saw that they, as well as he, were sharing in the experience of God. "Flesh and blood," that is to say, the preconceptions of the national messianic hope, had not revealed his messianic mission to them, but his Father in heaven. It was the first time that Jesus had been assured that this revealing power of God could be shared by his disciples. The Fourth Gospel describes the struggle through which those who listened to Jesus had to pass in order to accord him the messianic office. In detail it sets forth how Jesus explained that the loyal acceptance of his teaching would lead to fellowship with the Father. Read John 6:22-71. But in the synoptic gospels such inner struggle and assurance are set forth in other than Hellenistic fashion. They saw Jesus transfigured. Moses and Elijah, they realized, had foretold him. His significance seemed to be that of a heavenly visitant rather than a peripatetic teacher, misunderstood and opposed by religious leaders. Read Matthew 17:1-8 and parallel accounts in Mark and Luke. However one may interpret the account of the transfiguration, its purpose was clearly this. Jesus was seen in his messianic capacity as the revealer of God to man and himself a representative of the coming kingdom of God.

VIII. Jesus Experiences God in Foreseeing His Death

We have no specific statement in the synoptic gospels as to what effect this new understanding of his mission had upon Jesus himself, but it lies back of his teaching during the few months that preceded his arrival at Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, for it was from this time that Jesus was compelled to face a struggle with his disciples themselves. Convinced as he was from the prophets that his fate would be theirs, he endeavored to prepare his disciples for his death. It was a tragic situation. On one side was the conviction which Peter so vividly expressed that the Messiah could not be killed. On the other side was the temptation (the rock on which he might stumble) to seize upon popular enthusiasm and undertake a revolution. It is hard enough to face defeat, but it is even harder to persuade one's friends and admirers that such defeat is inevitable. More than once Jesus tried to convince his disciples as to this outcome of his mission, only to find them impregably entrenched in their own presupposition as to what the Messiah should be and do. They were afraid to ask him to explain his forecast of his future, and like every person who refuses to face truth with open eyes, they were to suffer later for their cowardice in the day when he was arrested, Matt. 9:22, 23; Mark 9:30-32.

During these months of apprehension, when Jesus had to plan his

work without the support of his friends, he had no recourse but his faith in the love of God. The kingdom might be immanent, but it had not come. The representative of divine love could only wait the course of circumstances, which the pursuit of duty involved. His friends, even his enemies, might warn him that he was in danger of arrest and death at the hands of Herod the Tetrarch, but he could reply that he was to go about the task given him by the Father, and await the Father's will. As John says, he "must work while it was day, because the night was coming in which no man could work." During the weeks of retirement in the regions near Samaria he must have been instructing his disciples, but he saw the hopelessness of the task in which he was engaged. He succeeded in persuading them that they were not to announce him as Messiah or permit others so to regard him, but he himself must have been engaged in his own self-mastery. He already could foresee the cup which he was to drink. The issue was to reach final expression in Gethsemane, but it must have been ever before him. Would the Father who was to establish the kingdom permit his representative to be defeated? If such defeat, with its consequent suffering and death, was inevitable, could he trust the love of God? Should he continue in the work for which he believed he had been empowered by the Spirit of God?

IX. Jesus' Experience in Relying on the Love of God

In the light of the subsequent facts we must conclude that during these months about which we know so little, Jesus reached a new conviction as to the love of God. He would accept his own defeat at the hands of his opponents as the will of the loving Father. The gospels make it plain that Jesus had to adjust himself to what he believed was the divine will. It is easy to believe in divine guidance when in the first flush of the enthusiasm of an initial success. In such a moment it seemed to Jesus, as it has seemed to many another man, John 4:35, that it was the divine will that this success should continue. But the course of events had shown Jesus that such success could not continue. He must exemplify in his own life that which he preached, that since God is loving it is not necessary to be anxious as to the morrow. In this struggle, as the Fourth Gospel sets forth, Jesus overcame the world because he held fast to his faith in the love of the God he had experienced, and whom he saw revealed as Father. He might have abandoned such conviction and yielded to the expectation of his followers. Other men have done this, and in order to establish over the kingdoms of the world what they believe to be the kingdom of God, have turned to war and terror. But Jesus had experienced the love of God and was setting forth that love as the basis

for human relations. However its herald might be defeated, his life must be consistent with his belief. With this deepened faith Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He knew what was awaiting him at the hands of others, but he also knew the love of the Father to whom he prayed, and whom he served as the herald of a kingdom that was not for a single nation nor "of this world."

As these studies have progressed the fact has constantly become more clear that mere references to brief passages from the gospels do not satisfy the desire to appreciate the experience of God which Jesus achieved. It is again suggested therefore that only by reading and rereading the gospels in large and continuous portions can one feel the personality of Jesus. Each of the gospels makes a special contribution to the whole, but each *is* a whole as that personality impressed the spokesman of a certain group. It is suggested that emphasis be placed this month upon the continuous reading of the Gospels of Matthew and John as presenting a larger content of that which helps us to picture Jesus' hopes, anticipations and disappointment, and his acceptance of the future.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name some of those influences which held the Jews together in Jesus' day although national independence was entirely lost.
2. What was the prevalent political conception of the kingdom of God?
3. By what path did they expect it to be brought about?
4. What differences of opinion were there upon this "way of revolution"?
5. What philosophy of life underlaid their revolutionary psychology?
6. What sort of preparation for the kingdom did Jesus recommend?
7. What was the inner character of the kingdom itself as idealized by the people?
8. What ideal of the kingdom did Jesus present?
9. How successful was Jesus in getting his ideal of the way of achieving the kingdom accepted as the early ideal of his direct followers?
10. At what point in his ministry do we find the first plain statement of the conviction of any of his disciples as to his messiahship?
11. How did these few harmonize their faith in his destiny with his statements concerning the immediate future?
12. How did professional ecclesiastics regard him at this time?
13. Why did *not* Jesus head a revolt?
14. How were his great decisions of the past reflected in his life during the last weeks?
15. What was the religious experience which came to him as a result of his extension of his mission to non-Jews?
16. How far was it possible to get this wider conception over to his disciples?
17. Make the clearest statement that you can of the readjustments in Jesus' mind and in his faith in God consequent upon the disaster which he foresaw.
18. How might he have avoided the future?
19. What in himself prevented his doing so?
20. How much reading of the gospels have you done in connection with this study?

Study VIII

Jesus' Experience of God in Facing Death

By WILLIAM CREIGHTON GRAHAM

I. Facing toward Death

The previous studies in this series have dealt with human life as a stimulus to fellowship with God in the experience of Jesus. In this present study we seek to learn the effect on his experience of God of the impingement of Death upon his consciousness.

A few weeks before his death Jesus had been in pursuit of his task as a prophetic teacher in districts remote from the city outside whose walls he was later crucified. The motivations of his movements and the route he and his party followed have been discussed in the previous study (p. 91 f.).

Jesus might have remained in these remoter regions indefinitely without bringing his affairs to a final crisis, for no external pressure prohibited such a cautious course. He was aware, moreover, that any efforts he might make to win the influential classes of his people to his philosophy of life were doomed to inglorious failure and would arouse dangerous resentments, Matt. 16:21; 17:22, 23; Mark 8:31; 9:30, 31; Luke 9:22, 44. Though much too specific in detail these passages are authentic insights into his mind on the matter of the attitude of Jewish authority to his ministry.

While in such circumstances and in the possession of such knowledge, Jesus one day resolved to go—of all places—to Jerusalem, Matt. 19:1; Mark 10:1; Luke 9:51. This decision was arrived at through no capricious whim or misguided ambition. It cost a mighty effort of the will, the explanation of which is that Jesus knew that it meant the forfeiture of his life.

Among the considerations which stimulated him to reach this hazardous resolve was the religious situation which prevailed in the Jewish community. Early in his life Jesus had identified himself with the cause of the masses who, between the political ambitions of the Sadducees and the social exclusiveness and spiritual pride of the Pharisees, were falling

into cynicism, pessimism, and counsels of despair. Being in the prophetic succession Jesus could not long evade such a call.

Concern for the deepest welfare of his own closest followers also played its part in stimulating Jesus to turn toward Jerusalem. His ministry in the north had been highly successful. Multitudes thronged to hear him, to see him, to be within reach of his healing touch. His influence grew by leaps and bounds. He was a vital, vibrant spiritual nucleus which might become, at a moments' notice, a social whirlwind sweeping over the land and leaving in its wake the wreckage of an outworn order. Living day by day in such an atmosphere, against the pull of whose little and base ambitions Jesus felt the need to fortify himself by prayer, his disciples, not yet reborn, were in the gravest moral danger. If Jesus were to raise up for himself a spiritual seed, their understanding of his vocation must be clarified as only in conflict it could be clarified.

His recent experiences in Sidonia had also much to do with his decision to move on Jerusalem, for they had taught him much about the social implications of his own theology. As a Jew he knew but one God, regnant over all peoples. As a Jew also he gave social and religious recognition to but one race—his own. It took such experiences as he had with the Canaanitish woman, Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30, to open his eyes to the irreconcilability of these attitudes.

When that insight flooded his mind its alchemy transformed some of his earlier attitudes and created new spiritual energies and capacities. The thoroughgoing supernaturalism which he had inherited from the past was blended with a practical dualism. He saw life as a struggle between good and evil forces in which he had long since committed himself to the side of the good. But his sojourn with alien folk made him see that the scope of that struggle is universal. Before, he had been with God against the complacent and spiritually unawakened and therefore evil elements in Judaism. That was a local issue which might wait on circumstance. But now the sharp contrast which he had experienced between the faith of the common people, whether of the chosen seed or not, and Jewish obduracy in high places, intensified his sense of obligation to a shepherdless humanity. Now he stood with God against all the powers of hell and he simply had to come to grips with them. Such a psychology immediately eliminated calculation and caution.¹

So moved, Jesus took the road for Jerusalem and the moment he did so Death moved into the field of his consciousness. The synoptic records, as they now stand, suggest that even before he began this last journey

¹ See S. J. Case, *Jesus*, pp. 380 ff.

he had foreknowledge that he would die just as in the end he did die. If that were the case it would be extremely doubtful that death would play much of a part in his experience of God until the journey neared its end. Death stimulates men in direct ratio to its imminence.

It is much more probable, however, that Jesus expected death by assassination. His movements after he entered Jerusalem demand this assumption. If this be the case then death was, to his consciousness, imminent from the moment he headed southward. The assassin's dagger might be waiting for him in any wayside bush or around any village corner.

II. The Road

After leaving Galilee Jesus spent several days on the Road in company with his disciples. There are available for us, as sources of knowledge about his experiences during these days, narratives of what he did and said in certain concrete life-situations, and reports of certain parables he is alleged to have recited.

Let us consider first the following group of passages with the aim of determining what part God had in his thought, emotions, and actions at this time: "The Teaching of Jesus about Divorce," Matt. 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12; "The Attitude of Jesus to Children," Matt. 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17; "The Relation of Riches to Eternal Life," Matt. 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30; "The Views of Jesus on Standards of Greatness," Matt. 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45; comp. Luke 22:24-27.

When these passages are studied they indicate clearly that Jesus conceived God as a morally purposive Being to the control of whose purposes the whole material universe was subject. It would seem, perhaps, that some ingenuity might be necessary to connect Jesus' attitude on divorce with such a cosmic proposition. Yet the moment we read the record the line of connection opens up at the point where Jesus reveals his mind concerning the validity of the Mosaic law on this subject, Deut. 24:1; comp. Mark 10:5. This social problem had become a public issue among the Jews while Jesus was still a youth, through the controversy between the liberal Rabbi Hillel and his conservative opponent Rabbi Shammai. It was because the latter, as a Pharisee, had to allow the premise of the finality, in principle, of the written law that he lost the case for the conservative attitude on divorce. For it was essential to the whole social philosophy of the Pharisees that the written law should be authoritative in principle but not in the details of its social application. Jesus, however, discarded even the authority, in principle, of the law of divorce,

describing it as a concession to human hardness. In its place he put a moral principle drawn from the creation story (Gen. 1:27). From the beginning the sex relationship had been divinely determined for all time to be sacred and inviolable. Men had never had any valid authority for separating those who were thus made one; comp. Mark 10:6-9. To Jesus a moral principle had priority over a legal precedent because the whole creation came under the dominance of a moral Being from whose decrees there was no final escape.

The experience which he was undergoing as he journeyed to Jerusalem was constantly subjecting his philosophy to a very severe test, the stress of which accounts for several of his actions and sayings. The record of his famous reaction to the children who were brought to him is a case in point. Jesus appreciated the significance of the unquestioning trustfulness of little children because he was coming to understand, as never before, how much there is in life that is not worthy of such an attitude.

A contact with a rich young ruler yielded a somewhat similar experience. It raised again the question of the wisdom of absolute consecration to the cause of goodness. The very goodness of the young man, which led him to see that quality in Jesus, Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18; comp. Matt. 19:17, was an argument for the modification of the demands which Jesus was making upon himself. The way the latter caught him up at once on this point of goodness by the assertion that it, in the true sense, is found only in God, indicates that the whole idea of the moral order was under scrutiny in his experience. Otherwise why seek occasion to affirm it?

With substantially the same angle of this problem of the moral order Jesus had to deal when two of his disciples, entirely out of sympathy with the standards of value he was demanding of himself, approached him with requests for precedence. Jesus could say nothing very definite to satisfy their very logical idea that order implies not only the existence of values but also their recognition. His first answer was a challenge. Were they ready to pay his price? (Mark 10:38). Nor did he question their sincerity when they declared themselves willing to go the limit (vs. 39). But he could not satisfy them with any definite promise. He had to fall back on the inscrutability of the divine mind (vs. 40). He knew that the path to high reward under a moral order was the path of service and that, generally speaking, chief rewards must be for those who traveled farthest in that path. But the whole philosophy of his way is not here expressed. Perhaps he had not yet looked long enough into the eyes of Death.

Luke's gospel, however, preserves a series of parables so true to

his spirit and so apposite to the problem of the moral order that they may be regarded as parables of the Road. These are as follows: the parable of the Good Samaritan, 10:30-37; the parable of the Prodigal Son, 15:11-32; the parable on Duty, 17:7-10; and the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, 18:9-14. With these should also be considered Matthew's parable on the householder and the Laborers, 20:1-16. It is no accident that all of these parables have a common theme—the question of rank and reward under a moral order. On the Road the disciples of Jesus did not see Death walking beside him, but saw Victory with all its train of tangible emoluments and preferments. They moved on Jerusalem in the fond hope of sitting in the seats of Privilege when they got there. And the Death that stalked invisibly beside Jesus would have seemed, to one of less penetrative insight than he, to suggest that their mundane philosophy had wisdom on its side. Thus was Jesus stimulated both to deep feeling and profound thinking which brought him a priceless experience of the absolute reliability of God and so prepared him for the final scenes in his drama.

The two most representative parables of the Road are those on the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. They are so representative that it is necessary only to deal with them. In Luke's gospel the parable of the Good Samaritan follows Jesus' word on the Great Commandment, 10:27; comp. Matt. 22:37-39, Mark 12:29-31. Mark's tradition about the attitude of the Pharisee who evoked this word from Jesus is free from the prejudice against that order which is common to Matthew and Luke and which suggests that their version is later and less reliable. This parable is not apposite to that incident as Mark reports it. We must suppose that Luke took liberties with its setting and possibly even with its subject matter. Originally the contrast it drew was not one of races but of classes—priest and levite on the one hand, and a common ordinary human traveler on the other.

The teaching of the parable is that Privilege has no place in the cosmic order. Robes and mitres, no more than crowns or coronets, guarantee the significance of the souls whose bodies they drape. Rank is a delusion and the human logic which justifies it as a concomitant of order is a snare. Jesus had an experience of the infallibility of the divine judgment. Life and Death together were teaching him that the infallible standards of God were not to be sought in the fallible institutions and conventions of men.

But still that was only a negative formulation of his problem, not a solution of it. And Jesus sorely needed a solution if he were, before it was too late, to raise himself a spiritual seed in his disciples. He came

then to grips with the ultimate problem of all philosophers, the problem of evil. But unlike the philosophers he found a solution for it because, as a religious man, he drew not only on his brain but upon his heart. That solution, the only workable one ever found, he embodied in the parable of the Prodigal Son, in the setting of which Luke has taken some well-nigh unpardonable liberties. As an audience for it he has collected a choice assembly of what he regards as opposites—publicans and sinners on the one hand, and scribes and pharisees on the other (15:1-2)—thus violating the principle enunciated in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Luke had a strong bias in favor of the former and against the latter either one of which we might condone with more grace were it not that here they have led to the obscuration of high truth and to the abuse of this passage in the propagation of unmoral sentimentality and the condonation of profligacy.

The real point of this parable was expressed by Paul when he wrote: "Love never faileth." The father did not fail even the prodigal. How much less did he fail that righteous son! That was the answer Jesus gave to death as he faced it on the Road. But that was not all, for that was no answer to the problem his disciples presented. For them he here formulated the principle that the attainment of sonship in God is the reward that justifies the moral order. He did this through the picture of the brother who failed the prodigal because he chose to be a servant rather than a son. He who accepts God's way must be able to thrust his head above the fogs of religious commercialism where the servant measures what he gives by what he receives in kind. To attain that status is to live under the order which holds the universe together. It is to live where the ledger of life always shows a balance on the credit side. So the soul of Jesus freed itself from any tincture of bitterness even while contemplating the human profligacy which reckons not of the crosses it calls upon love to bear. So much for the Road.¹

III. *The City*

The road may be, under certain circumstances, a good place to evolve a philosophy but the great city is the place to test it. A definitely different phase of Jesus' experience began as the Road wound through the gate of the ancient capital on which all the threads of the ever widening web of Jewish institutional life still converged.

All cities probably begin as places of refuge from social pressure. But if they take root and acquire the material basis on which culture

¹ Comp. W. C. Graham, *The Meaning of the Cross*, pp. 62 ff.

builds its institutions they become, for all save social nonentities, the foci on which social pressures of all kinds concentrate. Considering size, location, and intrinsic resources, Jerusalem afforded, in Jesus' day, as varied an assortment of social stresses as any city in the world. Here sat Roman authority with all its capacity for effective administration and for provocation of hardly repressed resentment. Here too were gathered a group of the most able and subtle ecclesiastical politicians in the world who fought, among themselves and against the Romans, a silent, ceaseless, and implacable struggle for social control. Hither came philosophically minded Greek traders and adventurers who pursued the goods and pleasures of life with cosmopolitan *savoir-faire*. Here, also, at stated seasons of the year, Jewish pilgrims were wont to collect in large numbers, creating a strange mélange of customs, habits, viewpoints, and prejudices, which were as divergent as the life of the world itself, from every productive part of which they came. Here too came "the people of the land" (*'Am ha-'aretz*), outwardly marked with the patience of a repressed and socially circumscribed ancestry, inwardly seething with all manner of dreams of liberation. Jerusalem, at the moment when Jesus entered it, was a city which, for one not socially integrated in its life, it was well to enter under the safe-conduct of obscurity.

Jesus entered it, nevertheless, as the momentary hero of a street mob that waved symbolic branches and hailed him as the inaugurator of a Davidic kingdom. And, having so entered, he went straight to the temple, the headquarters of those authorities who would take most careful cognizance of the manner of his coming. There are those who judge that this course of conduct was not of his own choosing, that it was forced upon him by the mistaken zeal of his friends. But if we have at all sympathetically entered into his experience on the Road, then we cannot so judge. Having chosen to rest his faith on a moral order, having accepted, as full compensation for anything that might be involved, the opportunity to *be* the son of God, Jesus' entry into the city was in the manner dictated by his own choice, Matt. 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:21-40. To his own consciousness he came as Humanity challenging Privilege in the name of a morally purposive God. The rôle of the Road, the rôle of the searcher for eternal verities, of the yearningly urgent teacher of earth-bound disciples, was left behind. Bare-handed and without reliable support save that which he found within himself, he carried the war to those who were, in his consciousness, the enemies of God.

If the records of the six days he spent in the crowded ways and perplexing social cross-currents of the city tell any consistent story of his experience at all, it is a story of the exaltation which comes only to those

who fight, by whatever technique, not merely for a good cause, but for a cause of cosmic significance. Making all due allowance for the coloring of the record through the anti-authoritarian prejudices stimulated by the social environment of the gospel writers, there is no escaping the conclusion that Jesus deliberately devoted these days to conflict. Almost everything he did was in defiance of those inhibitions which he, as a Jew from the pious element of the masses, would naturally inherit. Every move he made was a move which emphasized the antithesis between the authority that was in him and the authority that was in the City. He was eager to offend those who could best defend themselves because he sought to honor the faith that was in him by subjecting it to the most searching test that could be devised.

Not content with ejecting commerce from the temple he characterized the dispossessed merchants as "robbers", Matt. 21:12, 13; Mark 11:15-Luke 19:45, 46. When the Jewish rulers, naturally and rightly enough, challenged the authority on which he had so acted, he humiliated them by a display of his incomparable skill in dialectics Matt. 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8; comp. also Mark 12:13-27 and the parallels in Matthew and Luke.¹ As though this did not suffice he recited for these rulers a parable which quite obviously stigmatized them as unfaithful and murderous servants, worthy only to be superseded, Matt. 21:33, 34; Mark 12:1-11; Luke 20:9-16.²

There is no denying the evidence of a purpose to provoke an issue which these passages present. The conclusion is inescapable that the philosophy of the Road lies behind the remorseless cleverness of the assault he here makes upon the City. The faith into which he had tried so hard to lead his disciples, while they were with him in the way from Galilee, furnished the power which carried him into and through this conflict.

But Jesus did not pass all of the time, during his week in the city, in conflict with its authorities. Indeed there is no very clear record of any aggressive activity on his part during the last two days before the Passover. The Marcan chronology suggests that only the early part of the week was devoted to such public provocation of the ruling class. It is highly probable, indeed, that these last two days were spent in semi-

¹ Matthew 21:23 and Luke 20:1 suggest that the authorities were moved to challenge him because of the content of his teaching. Mark 11:27 says that the challenge was offered "as he was walking in the temple." The latter tradition leaves room for the view that it was his summary ejection of the money-changers on the previous day which stimulated their action.

² The Marcan tradition that this parable was addressed to the authorities is more reliable than that of Luke 20:9 in which it is addressed to the people.

seclusion outside the walls. Mark, at any rate, places in them a conference between Jesus and his followers on the Mount of Olives, in which he discoursed on events of the future, and a visit to the house of Simon the leper, Matt. 24:1-42; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-38 and Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9. These are the only two incidents which afford any record of him in a mood of self-revelation to his disciples. Hitherto he had been too busy and preoccupied to have opportunity for such fellowship. He had passed the days in a succession of tense situations and the nights in recuperating from the exhausting fatigue of nervous strain.

It is, then, perhaps significant that in both of these passages Jesus is represented as dwelling much upon his approaching death.¹ The whole discourse on the Mount of Olives bears on events which are to follow his death. The general authenticity of this passage may be accepted although those verses which suggest that Jesus thought of himself as the eschatological Messiah (comp. Matt. 24:5; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8) are so clearly colored by the controversial christology of a later day that their testimony is worthless. There is no doubt, however, that Jesus was in what might be described as a pessimistic mood during these last two days. Eschatological speculation is a sure symptom of pessimism. Through it idealistic souls compensate themselves for the disparity between the actual and the ideal which they feel helpless to remedy. It is simply a variety of the wish-thinking into which one falls in the reaction which succeeds exalted endeavors. In a similar reaction Elijah, after having challenged the monarchy, fled to the wilderness and found himself seated under a juniper tree wishing to die (I Kings 19:1-4). The prophetic psychology is such that life moves in a series of highly contrasting moods of exaltation and depression.

The same pessimistic mood is reflected in the story of his anointing in Bethany. The purpose of the woman was to honor him as in some special sense significant, yet Jesus points the emphasis of the occasion in quite a different direction. The exalted mood of conflict, through which men face death yet give it no thought, is gone and Death once more looms large in his consciousness, driving him back on inherited symbolisms and defense mechanisms. These incidents bear no witness for a genuine experience of God. In the city Jesus found God only in the midst of the exaltation of conflict with those whom he regarded as God's enemies.

IV. The Upper Room

Jesus went to the last supper with his disciples in the mood which had held him for two days. Death was very imminent to his conscious-

¹ Cf. S. J. Case, *Jesus*. p. 283.

ness, so much so that it became the sole theme of his conversation with his disciples.

The fact that Jesus, himself, in the midst of an hour of fellowship, raised the matter of a disloyalty to himself within that group gives us an insight into his mind. There is a reminiscence of the old unwritten law of his distant nomadic ancestors concerning the inviolability, to each other, of those who have taken food together when he says: "One of you shall betray me, even he that eateth with me" (Mark 14:18). Jesus felt it very keenly that there should be a traitor among those with whom he had shared not only his material substance but also the bread of the spirit. He compensated himself for this defection by regarding the approaching dénouement as part of a cosmic plan. But that mental adjustment did not entirely remove his natural resentment against the disciple who was to be a party to the fulfilment of the plan, Matt. 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22. Death was feeling out the outer defenses of his soul, driving him back from one inherited defense mechanism to another.

The dominance of this mood led him also to transfer the significance of the paschal meal from the historic occasion of which it was a reminder to his own imaginatively realized death. Luke, feeling this, supplements the Marcan tradition with the words: "This do in remembrance of me," Luke 22:19; comp. Matt. 26:26-28 and Mark 14:22-24. In the face of death and of what men would regard as defeat, the mind of Jesus, in these moments when the direct stimulation of the pursuit of his mission was not operative, searched for escape from the inevitabilities of his vocation.

V. The Garden

It was in the Garden that he finally came to abandon the outworks of his spiritual defenses and retired into the innermost citadel. There he must fight, in one last fierce battle with his humanity, the issue which he had, in more leisurely fashion, canvassed on the Road and tested, in the heat of conflict, in the City. Here, then, were brought face to face in his consciousness life and death, happiness and suffering, order and chaos, God and the powers of evil. The moment of final decision was at hand. Reality had beaten down all the mind's artifices of defense. He did not hesitate to ask, now, that he be excused from the final test which in the conflict in the City he had openly courted.

But as he imaginatively faced that test it is a fact worthy of note that his world-view was not one whit altered. He was not alone in his innermost citadel. God was not only in the world. He was in the citadel itself.

It is notable, too, that though evil and suffering were also present within that citadel Jesus never for an instant raised the philosophical problem of the "why?" of the suffering he faced. He raised only the practical question of the necessity of the suffering. That fact has a very important bearing on his experience of God. For him God was not an arbiter delicately balanced between the Good man desires and the Evil which the world order imposes upon him. Not a Being balanced on the apex of a celestial triangle, at the extremes of whose base lie these incompatibles. That sort of God is the creation of philosophical monotheism. But the monotheism of Jesus was practical monotheism. It was an evolution from ages of living, not a formula derived from cerebral agitations. It had grown up from those dim ages when the gods were the helpers of men, when their worshipers were content to credit them with a purpose to achieve the perfect Cosmos and felt it no detraction to conceive them as desiring and needing the co-operation of their creatures.¹

Jesus' experience of God in the garden was, then, an experience of identification with a Being like unto himself but wiser and stronger. It was because he was the kind of a God to whom he might expose his humanity in a plea for escape, that he was able, when that plea was denied, to commit himself to that superior wisdom and power. In the Garden Jesus found a God who held him to the way to which he had committed himself in his most exalted moods on the Road and in the City.

Having found that God within himself Jesus saw the human frailties of his disciples in a new light. The touch of asperity, with which he had set the weakness of the flesh over against the willingness of the spirit, Matt. 26:40, 41; Mark 14:37, 38; comp. Luke 22:46, vanished when the new submission was achieved, Matt. 26:45; Mark 14:41. Even Judas, the traitor, when he appeared on the scene a moment later, received no word of rebuke, Matt. 26:50; Mark 14:45. This Jesus, newly reconciled and consecrated to the way of God, had acquired a quality which was to break that traitor's heart; comp. Matt. 27:3-5.

VI. *The Halls of Judgment*

The synoptic writers unite on the tradition that, early on the morning of his execution, Jesus was summarily tried and condemned by a religious and by a civil court. How brief a time those judicial procedures must have occupied is clear from the fact that Jesus was nailed to the cross about nine in the morning and that a considerable interval must be allowed for between the passing of sentence by Pilate and the crucifixion.

¹ Cf. Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy*, p. 561.

The records of these trials are so highly colored by the apologetic attitudes of a later day that it is not safe to put any credence in their report of the very few words he himself is said to have uttered. In the trial before the Jewish authorities Jesus is reported to have made certain brief assertions of his own messianic status and of the early appearance of an apocalyptic messiah, Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:61, 62; Luke 22:67-70. Since these are closely connected as the record stands, it is natural to assume that Jesus refers to himself in both cases, though nowhere is such a statement specifically made. There can be little doubt that Jesus, as he neared the end, had an increasing sense of his own cosmic significance which amounted to a consciousness of messiahship. But these passages probably reflect the ideas of later disciples on the nature of his office and the manner of his vindication rather than his own.

It is true that as his personal experience of God developed he conceived his relationship in terms of sonship. But it is also true that he felt that that same relationship was open to others than himself. Otherwise he would not have been at such pains to expound it to his disciples as he manifested on the Road. He came to the Halls of Judgment directly from the Garden where, if we have read his experience aright, he considered his destiny to have been finally sealed and settled. He must have felt, after that experience, that no word he might utter before the authorities could alter the eventuality or change men's opinions about his significance. After the Garden Jesus had only one problem, and that was to endure to the end. It is reasonable to assume that, from that point on, he would need to concentrate on the memory of his pact with God, and that he would resist any effort to involve his attention in the affairs and opinions of men.

When considered as a whole the synoptic records lend support to this assumption. Matthew and Mark agree that his reticence embarrassed the officials of the Jewish court more than anything else, Matt. 26:62, 63; Mark 14:60, 61. All three gospels credit him with the use of the enigmatic formula "Thou sayest" in answer to leading questions; Matt. 26:64; 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 22:70; 23:3. It is hard to be certain of just what Jesus meant by these words. But they seem to be an assertion that so far as he was concerned, the whole matter was settled. It is as though he answered all attempts to get him to express his views about himself with the modern colloquialism "That is now up to you." Jesus must have known that these trials were a farce, and that his death had been predetermined by the Jewish authorities. When he, therefore, stood before these authorities there was no possible defense for his dignity save reticence. How much more would this be the case when he faced,

in the person of Pilate, an authority which was wholly ignorant of the issues at stake and essentially indifferent, not only to Jesus, but to his race as well.

His hour in the Halls of Judgment gave to Jesus an opportunity to demonstrate in public that the pact he had made with God in the Garden was, for him, final and irrevocable. Death was the way. He gave himself wholly over to the stern business of walking in it.

VII. The Mount of Calvary

The reticence which characterized Jesus in the Halls of Judgment remained with him through his endurance of the sentence there passed on him. To appreciate this we must remember that six long hours of agony elapsed from the moment of crucifixion to his death. If one accepts as authentic all the words attributed to him during these hours in all four gospel narratives, the fact remains that his bearing on the cross was that of one who has set himself to endure to the end.

The possibility is, however, that the mind of Jesus clung even more exclusively to his pact with God in the Garden than our present record suggests. In the earliest tradition, that of Matthew and Mark, he speaks only once, namely, when he cries "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" If that tradition is accurate, then we must admit that Jesus experienced some failure on the part of God toward him, which indeed, would not be at all impossible in one whose psychology was prophetic. There are many who incline to accept the authenticity of these words precisely because they are not such as the gospel writers would wish to report.

There is so much cogency in this argument that it seems wholly probable that Jesus did cry out something in his last extremity. But the record itself states that even "some of those who stood by" did not understand him to say what is here reported. When we remember that his cry, as now reported, is a quotation from Psalm 22:1, and that the tradition of the bearing of this Psalm on the crucifixion was expanded as time passed¹ it is reasonable to conclude that the historical fact is that Jesus, in his last moment of agony, called upon God for help. Indeed the reaction of "those who stood by" was that Jesus had asked for succor.

There is, then, no sure evidence that Jesus, down to the moment of his death, ever experienced any failure toward him on the part of God. There is no reason to believe that his conception of his vocation was such that, after his final facing of the issue in the Garden, he could hope for

¹ Compare the Matthew-Mark narrative with the records in Luke and John.

any kind of victory other than would come to him through death. During every moment in which he hung on the tree he was depending on the God he had experienced on the Road, in the City, and in the Garden. His cry for help was but a vocal expression of that dominant attitude.

The soul of Jesus went out, then, on the wings of that faith which had been finally rounded out as he grappled with Life, in the company of Death, on the journey from Galilee to Calvary. That faith was that the order of the universe is essentially moral and that the price which life may exact from those who act on that basis can never be high enough to justify any other philosophy. That was, is, and always shall be, the faith of the innermost citadel, the faith by which all constructive lives are actually governed, no matter how the vagaries of the mind may be at variance with it.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name some of the reasons for the decision of Jesus to go to Jerusalem.
2. What were the probabilities of death on the way or in the city?
3. Give evidences of his confidence that his life was in this, in God's hands as always.
4. How did he impress upon his disciples his philosophy of life, during this journey?
5. How did their personal anticipations from the Jerusalem trip differ from his?
6. Analyze the crowd customarily in Jerusalem at the Passover season.
7. What led Jesus to enter the city in the manner which he chose?
8. How would such an entry appear to his enemies?
9. Describe some of the conflicts of the immediately following days.
10. How was this severity of Jesus related to his experience of God in his chosen task?
11. What evidence do you find of moments of depression after this exalted mood?
12. What interpretation of the struggle in the Garden can you draw from this study?
13. How did this experience help him in the following hours?
14. How do you explain the reticence of Jesus before his accusers? Why no defense?
15. Do you think that the faith of Jesus in God was justified?
16. Thinking over your study of this series as a whole
 - a) Has Jesus become more real to you?
 - b) Have you seen some similarity between the religious experiences of Jesus and of other heroic men devoted to great humanitarian causes?
 - c) Have you noted respects in which his experience of God is unique?
 - d) Have you found his conduct in the midst of these experiences unique?
 - e) Has association with Jesus through this study increased your appreciation of what "following Jesus" means?

Suggestions to Leaders of Groups

First Study

In this study of Jesus those will gain most who become vividly aware of the background of the life of Jesus. It would certainly be well, therefore, at meetings of the study groups to have always present a good map of Palestine and, if possible, a relief map which will show the contour of the country. A wealth of pictures will also give reality to the imagined scenes of the daily life of Jesus. The stereoscope pictures by Underwood and Underwood give more variety perhaps than any other selection. The Tissot pictures are also realistic.

Some good books would be useful. The difficulty with the many biographies of Jesus is the fact that usually they are written to demonstrate some point of view in regard to Jesus and that it is difficult to find one which simply narrates in a vivid fashion the story of Jesus. A good book to help in the realization of the customs and the boyhood environment of Jesus is Edersheim's *In the Days of Jesus*; yet it is not a new book. *Jesus*, by Shirley J. Case, is a vivid presentation of the times of Jesus. It is not a biography in any sense of the word, but it gives very interesting material to serve as a setting into which one can fit his own conception of Jesus. It is not a book, however, which will interest young people but only those who have some technical training.

Instead of suggestions of formal programs for the work of the Clubs, there will be given each month a series of questions for investigation and discussion. A selection can be made from these questions according to the interests of the group, as all of them are capable of expansion. For this month these suggestions are as follows:

1. Consider your own home and those which you know most intimately, and raise the question, "What is there in the modern home which would give to a boy or girl the 'at homeness' with religion that was felt by the Jewish boy in a good home?" Compare the observance of Sunday and of the Christian holidays with the religious holidays of Jesus' time. Is our way better for our time? Could we get more religious values out of these occasions than we do? If so, how?

2. Find out, if you can, among the youth of your church, the depth of religious experience which was associated with uniting with the church. Was there an increased sense of responsibility to God? Was there increased dependence upon him and a desire to fellowship with him? Some young people will be glad to discuss these questions freely.

3. How is religion associated with education today, and are there possibilities of experi-

ences of God among the boys and girls through regular school work? What are they? Are pupils conscious of them?

4. How may education in science, history, or literature be made to contribute more to a lad's experience of God than it generally does?

5. To what extent can youth today gain an experience of God through the study of the Bible, and how will such study differ from that of Jesus?

6. How can youth today cultivate an awareness of the world and its needs which will in some sense correspond to the appreciation that Jesus gained from the fact of his residence on a busy highway of the world of his time?

7. To what extent is modern patriotism an experience of God?

8. What are the advantages and disadvantages of poverty and the necessity for labor, so far as the religion of youth today is concerned?

9. What are the essential attitudes of youth in the experience of God today?

10. What hinders the cultivation of these attitudes? To what extent is the responsibility upon youth itself, to what extent upon the parents, upon the church, and upon the community? What are the penalties for lack of attention to the cultivation of these attitudes?

Second Study

It would be a good plan to add to the list of useful books suggested in the preceding study, those to which reference is made by the author of this chapter. They are, *The Master* by W. R. Bowie, a book published in 1930 by a deeply spiritual minister, now Bishop Coadjutor in the Episcopal Church; *New Testament Times in Palestine* by Shailer Mathews, a book of long standing but giving briefly and clearly a sense of the whole situation, political, religious, and social in the days of Jesus; *The Jesus of History* by T. R. Glover, especially interesting in the light which it throws upon Jesus' intimate knowledge of the common life of the people about him. All of these books are comparatively easy to read, and can be enjoyed by the members of the group as well as by the leader.

The period of Jesus' life which furnishes the basis for this study is so full of possibilities for discussion that leaders will doubtless develop many topics which are not here suggested. The following are chosen because they seem to be quite within the possibilities of the average group.

1. It will be of service if one member of the group will give a somewhat comprehensive picture of the influence of the Romans in Palestine and Asia Minor in the first century, presenting both the favorable and unfavorable aspects of the subject.

2. Although not so closely allied to the subject in hand, it would not be inappropriate to have some suggestion of parallels and contrasts between the foregoing and the present situation in Palestine, simply as a current topic. The question may be suggested: "What course would Jesus take if he were a young man today in Palestine with the choice of his life-work before him?"

3. It would be an interesting test to question fifty people of mature years as to how each came to enter upon his present career. This investigation may be quite impersonal so far as the report is concerned. In how many cases did a desire to work with or for God have anything to do with the choice?

4. Another investigation might be carried on by conversing with a considerable number of young people now choosing their life-work, somewhat as follows:

- a) Are they choosing, or only "falling into," a sphere of activity?
- b) If choosing, what motives are guiding the choice?
- c) In how many cases would the choice be changed if influenced chiefly by a desire to work with God in serving humanity?

d) What "callings" are necessary to uphold the life of a community? Are any of these unreligious simply because they do not deal with religion? Points under this topic could be multiplied indefinitely, and will be if the group is led to suggest in advance.

5. Our study has helped us to see very clearly that Jesus understood people. How can we come to understand them? Do we make a definite effort to gain such understanding?

6. We have come to see that Jesus' sense of companionship and the help of God was constantly growing, that is, he was gaining experience of God continually. If we followed the same methods in a similar spirit, might we come to have some such experiences? This question should be discussed pro and con.

7. Is youth today subject to the temptation which Jesus met in the realization of power? There are many angles to the question of the use of power—uncontrolled power versus controlled power, and the like.

Third Study

Not many years ago the dominant question in the consideration of the healing ministry of Jesus was that of the miracles. One's Christian religion was challenged on the basis of whether he "believed in the miracles" or not. Emphasis has shifted in this respect, and we now see that, as our author this month has pointed out, the question of our belief in miracles is not the important matter, for whatever that may be, it is very certain that the writers of the Gospels did believe in them and expected them, that Jesus himself had unlimited confidence in the power of God over material as well as spiritual things, and that he never hesitated to call upon God to use his power for the benefit of those who suffered. Our author has very carefully pointed out, however, that Jesus shared in the current belief of his time, which held that a change of spiritual attitude was a necessary preliminary to physical healing. So far as our study is concerned, therefore, Jesus' healing ministry was a spiritual ministry primarily, and our study should have led the members of the group to feel that very deeply.

The wise leader will be careful in handling his group in this study to keep them off the subject of whether the acts of Jesus were really miracles or not, for unless he is careful much time will be wasted on worthless discussion. Every effort should be made to hold the group to the supreme purpose of the course, namely, to learn how Jesus in following his highest ideals, experienced God. A multitude of topics arise out of the possibilities of this month's study. Some of them might be as follows:

I. Concerning Jesus' use of power: (1) What was his attitude toward his own power? (2) In what directions did he use it, and in what directions did he refrain from using it? (3) How did his recognition of God as the source of his power enter into his activities, his thought, his religious life, his assured confidence in the co-operation of God, his confident belief that such co-operation was contingent upon his own type of life?

II. Matters for investigation might run along two or three different lines: (1) In what ways are the social settlements expressing the attitudes of Jesus in the work which they are doing? (2) In social settlements where no religious education or services of worship are carried on, does this mean that they are not religious institutions? (3) If possible, make a study of the contacts and personnel of a settlement which is independent and of an institutional church which carries on the same type of work under the auspices of the church. Is one more religious than the other? If so, in what respect?

III. Another interesting field of investigation would be the religious attitudes of medical men: (1) How far does a Christian medical man use his religious attitudes in dealing with patients? (2) It would be an interesting thing to have a talk from a physician of experience and Christian character who would have something to say about his own discovery of God in meeting the exigencies of life among the sick. (3) A third interesting topic would be a discussion, with the assistance of a minister and a medical man, of the extent to which spiritual attitudes effect healing. A good psychiatrist can make a real contribution here and furnish much food for thought.

IV. The final discussion might consider how our appreciation of Jesus has been increased by the study of his healing ministry from the various points of view suggested, and to what extent those not professionally engaged in healing or caring for the sick can find an experience of God through the expression of the spirit of fellowship which characterized Jesus' attitude toward the people about him.

Fourth Study

A map study of the Mediterranean region with a view to contrasting the character of the conquering powers on the Northeast with those of the Romans in the West would be an illuminating background for this month's study. Good maps should be used, which are probably at hand at the schools and can be borrowed. Perhaps a good political geographer can also be drafted for a half-hour's talk. Remembering that this information is needed only to enable us to see Jesus more clearly and to better appreciate his motives, let it lead up to some of the following topics for general discussion, or for individual contributions.

1. Each of the greatest prophets—Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Unknown Prophet of the Exile and Jesus as well—thought religion with God as its center would be perpetuated and become universal. It would be interesting to compare the basis of each man's confidence with that of Jesus. This could be done by members of the group each taking a different man, or by one taking all.

2. Granting Jesus' extraordinary power over men, could he have raised a successful revolt and led his people to independence? If so, would it have been better for them and for the world? A good subject for debate.

3. What are the experiences in political life that, taken aright, might lead to an experience of God? What feelings might be the evidence of this?

4. In what way was the recent World War an experience of God to young manhood, and when did it cease to be such?

5. On what principles can one decide how he should cast his vote, or throw his influence in political matters?

6. If the spirit of Jesus were injected into civic affairs, would there still be factions? If so, why? Can many men be attempting to act upon the principles of Jesus and yet have differing opinions? Is this desirable? If so, why?

7. Discussion.—Jesus' ideal of the road to peace versus the Roman ideal, and modern prototypes, in Italy with Mussolini and in America with Herbert Hoover. Which is more likely to succeed? Which may command an experience of God, and why?

The foregoing suggestions may not lead, in the process of discussion, to definite conclusions or to unanimous decisions. Their object is, rather, to help people to learn to think and to find reasons for their thinking. The mental apathy and indolence of most Christian people in dealing with religion is the condition that we should attempt to change in older people and to avoid in younger people. Only good mental exercise in this field will bring about the results sought.

Fifth Study

With the background of the previous studies and in the light of the more comprehensive reading of the gospels which has been suggested in connection with this study, we may be able to get a greater appreciation of the significance of personality. It has been observed through these studies that many of those things which divorced Jesus from the people of his times, influenced as he doubtless was by the current social conditions, were due to the reaction of his personality against some things, and the response of his personality to other things. More clearly than ever before, therefore, we see the importance of creative moral attitudes. Some of the particular questions which might be discussed are as follows:

1. If Jesus had been a resident of this country and these times, what features of society would have received his sharp criticism and would have been denounced as "sinful"?

2. Raise this same question with reference to your local community.

3. To what extent is it true that *indifference* is responsible for the largest proportion of the evils of society? Let this discussion center around particular evils, so that it may have genuine content.

4. In the present acute industrial depression, what proportion of attention is given to the relief of suffering, and what to the study of the real causes of the difficulty? What is the relative importance of these two attitudes?

5. How does education, travel, reading, and the cultivation of wider intelligence in every way, develop world-consciousness, and what relation has world-consciousness to world-responsibility?

6. In our conduct of religious education, how much room must we leave for the creative action of personality?

7. A very interesting field for exploration, discovery, and discussion would be the study of biographies with special interest in finding how much of a person's thinking and living, and how much of his contribution to his times, is attributable to circumstances and how much to creative personality.

8. Why is it that a really creative personality usually arouses a larger proportion of opposition than agreement?

These are all large questions and selection will be necessary, but local conditions will help the leader to see which would be the most valuable of these discussions for his particular group.

Sixth Study

The thing which is vital in this month's work is the gaining of a basic principle for the appreciation and critical evaluation of our own religious institutional life and customs. Discussion will center somewhat about the question of humanitarian serviceability.

1. Some very interesting observation work can be done in communities where opportunity exists as follows:

a) A visit to a Jewish synagogue where some of the religious customs existing in the days of Jesus can be observed, and comparisons made.

b) A visit to a Russian church service, highly ritualistic and devout.

c) A visit to an Episcopalian church where building and rich ceremonial contribute beauty and harmony.

d) A visit to a Roman Catholic church where priesthood and altar are conspicuous.

e) A visit to a Negro church where the singing of spirituals and other typical customs lend fervor.

f) A visit to a Quaker meeting where ritual finds no place and simplicity reaches its highest level.

2. In communities where opportunities for such visits do not exist, much of the information can be secured from books and from the experiences of people who have come in contact with these groups in other localities. A study of a church service in Puritan times would be interesting where dependence upon books is necessary. Whether the information is gathered from books or from visits there should follow a discussion of the various phases of the service, and the contribution which each may make to the religious life of people who are accustomed to it.

3. An important element in all institutional observance of religion is that of prayer. It would be well to discuss what place prayer actually takes in the life of the individual and of the church which he attends. What are the advantages or the disadvantages of spontaneous, extemporaneous, and of ritual prayer? What effect does belief have on prayer? What would be the loss if prayer were dropped out of religious life?

4. The Lord's Supper is a custom or institution of the modern church but is observed differently and at different times by different church bodies. What does it mean to the modern Christian? What about its frequency? What about its inclusiveness?

5. Fasting is still a custom in the Roman Catholic church and sometimes in Protestant churches, especially during Lent. It happens that this study falls at the Lenten season. It is particularly appropriate, therefore, that the whole subject of the observance of Lent

be discussed at this time. Is its observance increasing or diminishing? What does it do for those who observe it? Would an increase in its observance be of value? If so, how?

6. What is the difference between the observance of institutions of the church and religion in countries where there is a State church, and in those where there is not? How did we come to abolish the State church in America? Some very interesting bits of history are to be found here. Professor William Warren Sweet's new book, *The Story of Religions in America*, will help.

7. What relation has money to the church as an institution? What proportion of the church's income should be used for building and for those things which make it conspicuous in the public eye? Should persons of wealth in a church have a larger voice in the affairs of the church than those who have education and judgment but less money? What obligation has the church to the community in times of widespread poverty like the present?

8. What relation has the church to civic affairs in the community? How can its influence be felt without partisan alliance? This is a day and generation in which the church must stand on its record. A critical evaluation such as Jesus gave to the religious institutions of his time is legitimate. The difficulty is that there are thousands of people who are evaluating the church but who have not his intelligent moral basis of discrimination. It is well, therefore, for those who are interested in the church to learn to formulate their allegiance in a series of justifiable defense statements. This study gives great opportunity for the development of such appreciation and the opportunity should not be lost.

9. Discuss Review Questions 14-21.

Seventh Study

The present study cannot fail to arouse many questions as to what Jesus really visioned as the kingdom of God. Therefore, the first discussion should center about that point. A new book by Prof. Ernest F. Scott, *The Kingdom of God in the New Testament*, presents a careful and complete yet brief treatment of this subject and any leader will be well repaid for reading it. Passages from it might even be discussed with the group in connection with this month's study. The effort of those following the course should, however, be primarily directed toward a keen realization of Jesus' experience in this desperately trying period of his life. Therefore, topics that bring this realization may be wisely used.

1. Let different members, by studying the characteristics of different disciples, picture a probable series of impressions in the mind of each of the men with whom Jesus was journeying back to Jerusalem when Peter said, "Thou art the Christ."

2. Discuss the question, "Suppose that Jesus had heeded the advice of his disciples and had turned back away from Jerusalem, how far reaching might have been the results for himself and for the Christian world?" Would there have been any "Christian world"?

3. Many people today are ready to accept the idea of brotherhood and mutual service, but set aside the idea of God and his fatherly relations to the universe and man. How much is the idea of brotherhood dependent upon that of fatherhood in the spiritual realm?

4. How much does the future of the kingdom of God in case we wish to work for its spread depend upon organization? Was Jesus' ideal that of organization or that of individual attitude?

5. What part are the great church societies contributing to the growth of the kingdom? How about the societies in your own denomination? What do you know about their work and aims, their successes and failures?

6. How do movements like labor unions, child-welfare, and other social welfare agencies fit into the progress of the kingdom? Does the fact that they are not classed as religious societies alter or lessen their contribution?

7. What do you as an individual consider the best method of promoting the growth of the kingdom? Are you in any way engaged in the use of this method?

8. What individuals do you know who are in a national or an international way promoting the ideals of brotherliness among men coupled with the fatherliness of God?

9. If Jesus experienced God more fully in realization of coming disaster and apparent defeat, does it follow that suffering necessarily brings experience of God? If not, what are the conditions which would make suffering thus contribute to deeper life?

Eighth Study

This study should come to a conclusion with a series of discussions. The club leader may perhaps desire to choose his own subjects, those which have arisen out of his experience with the group and are related to the local situation. These might be in the direction of the application of the moral insight of Jesus to certain local situations which are known to the group. There should also, however, be opportunity to discuss some of the important questions arising out of the study itself. Some such are given below:

1. What has this study contributed in the way of giving greater reality to Jesus, and why has it made this contribution?

2. A study of heroic lives devoted to great humanitarian causes, which are in some respects similar to Jesus' life. A good deal of time can be given to this and reports brought in on the lives of men whose names are suggested by the group. These should be studied, not alone with reference to their contribution, but with the question in mind "Had they an experience of God and what did it have to do with the work which they did?"

3. A series of questions reaching back over the whole course might be discussed as (a) What, in Jesus, was due to his Jewish birth and bringing-up? (b) How largely did Jesus feel himself responsible for the well-being of his fellow-men? as, for instance, in his healing acts and his teaching. (c) Looking back over the whole life of Jesus can you picture what might have been his life if he had at any time departed from his chosen mission? (d) What is there in the life and death of Jesus to encourage our hope in the future life?

4. A group in a local church has recently been engaged in discussing the educational needs of the church school. Again and again the members of the group have found themselves face to face with questions which needed to be answered. One of these questions is "What is the Christian life?" The formulation and discussion of this question would make an interesting period in any group, as it did in this one.

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